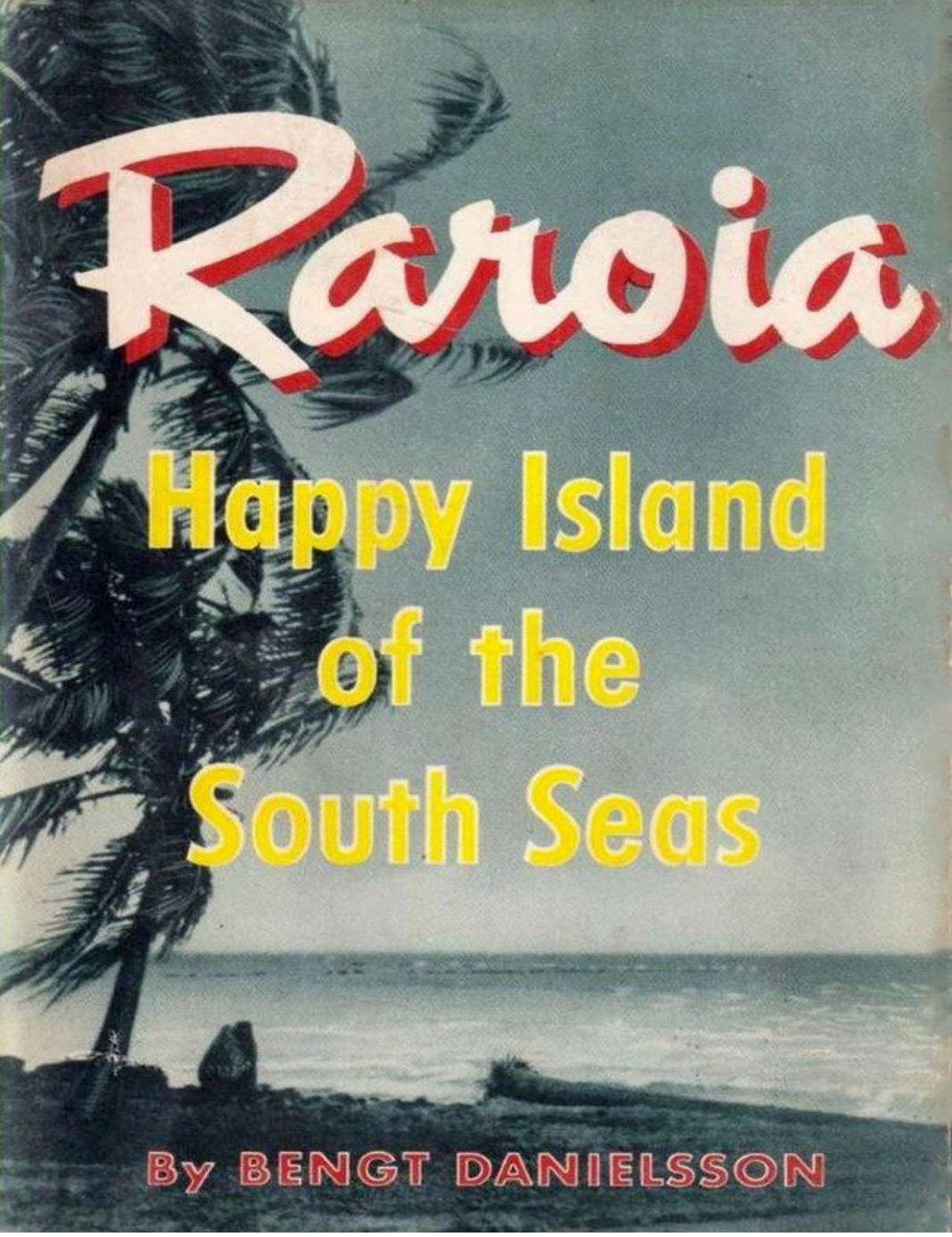
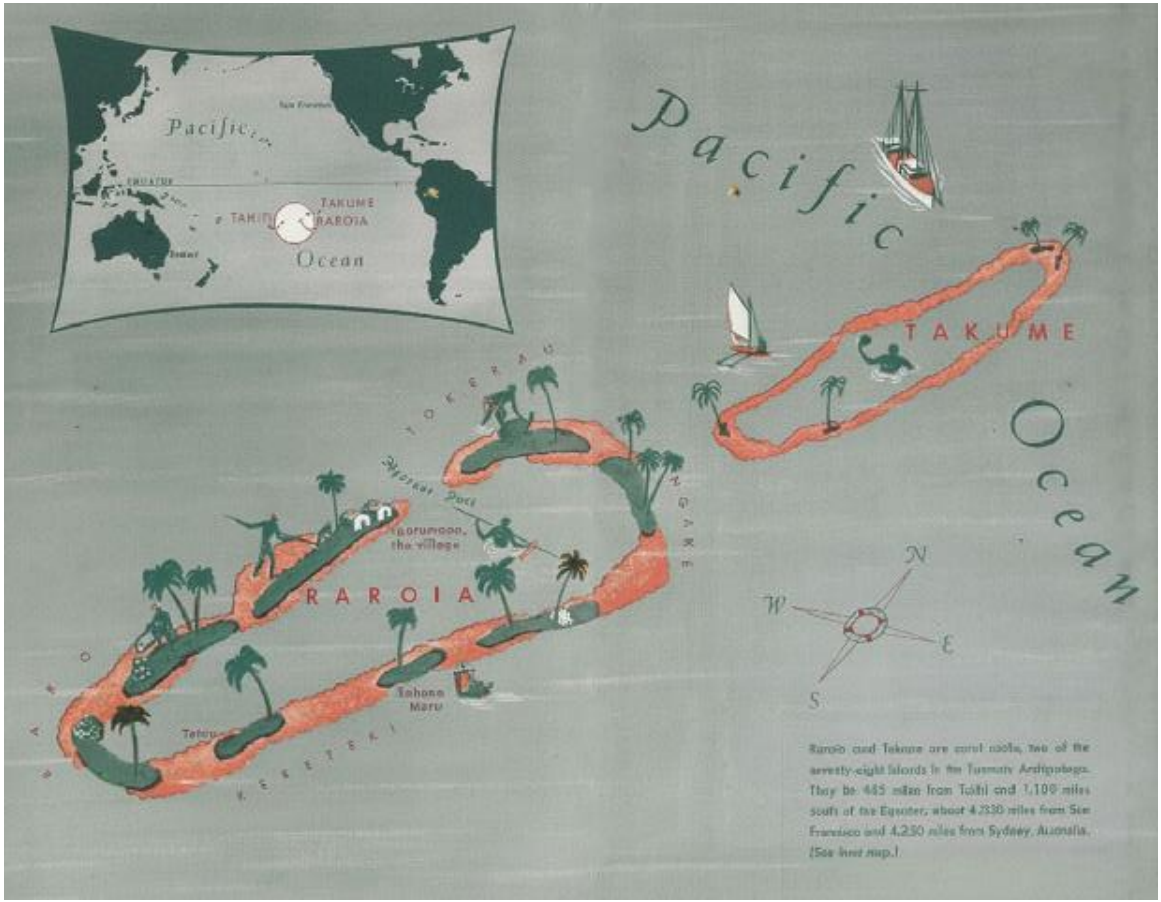

Raroia
Happy Island
of the
South Seas
By BENGT DANIELSSON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Raroia and Takume are coral atolls, two of the seventy-eight islands in the Tuamotu Archipelago. They lie 445 miles from Tahiti and 1,100 miles south of the Equator, about 4,750 miles from San Francisco and 4,250 miles from Sydney, Australia. (See inset map.)

Raroia

Raroia
Happy Island of the South Seas

By BENGT DANIELSSON

Translated from the Swedish
by F.H. LYON

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-Raroia's narrow belt of coral atoll encloses a vast lagoon.
-The Peruvian coconut palm protected by a fence.
-Raroians faithfully observe Mass in a church built of coral cement in 1875.
-The natives dress carefully each Sunday, and some even put on shoes.

-*Poe* is made by dropping red-hot stones into a mixture of fruit, starch, and water.
-The islanders have found a use for empty beer bottles - they use them for a garden border.
-Here there are no troubles or worries! The tiny tots splash about in the cove near the village....
....and the young folks and adults rider their fine, shiny bicycles up and down the village streets.
-About once a month a schooner comes to get copra in exchange for *popaa* goods.
-The schooner is the Raroians only connection to the outer world, and they hurry to exchange their copra for goods.
-Almost everyday Marie-Thérèse dressed leg boils and cuts from coral
-Another chronic complaint is toothache.
-The finest piece of furniture in every house is an iron bed or divan.

-Old Te Iho, the last sage on the island.
-I went down to the landing place on the bay and sat upon the chief's seat at the stone-built marae.
-The girls often work more than the women.
-Raroian still use palm leaf for a variety of purposes.
-Marie-Thérèse, in native costume, splits a palm leaf.
-Polynesian women have a reputation for attractiveness, and many are astonishingly comely.

-Back to the old times when weapons were made of wood - a spear sharpened at both ends and a heavy club!

-The women practiced long and hard to perfect a special dance for the governor's visit.
-And the men made special gifts for the long-awaited governor.
-Dressed in native costume, I tried on a palm-leaf crown.
-When copra is to be made on Raro, the whole family sets out in one canoe.
-A wheelbarrow loaded with provisions to be taken to the lagoon islands.
-At the lagoon islands, after the nuts have been split with an ax, the halves are piled up.
-After the heaped-up nuts have dried, the copra is removed with a special knife.
-A boy drinks the coconut water from one of the three eyes.
-Raroians now make fire by rubbing two sticks only when matches are not available.

-Spear-fishing is a popular sport and the fisherman sometimes keep the first fish on the spear.
-Marie-Thérèse could not help being amused when she picked up this "nosefish."
-Harpooning fish on the outer reef requires sharp sight and great agility.
-The natives also fish-hunt with dogs.
-Catching turtles is another sport.
-A *rena*, a garland of palm leaves, is used to encircle a shoal of fsih and slowly pull it inshore.
-On the beach, after the catch has been brought in, everyone takes his share.

-The Chinese, who control most of the retail trade, are slowly spreading over the Tuamotu atolls.
-Natives with the measles lie on the schooner's deck.

-In outrigger canoes we sailed from Raroia to Takume.
-The eternal trade wind gently sways the palms.
-Maona brings up from the depths of the Takume lagoon a pearl mussel.
-Tehei showed us how to open a pearl mussel.
-Marie-Thérèse leisurely strokes our cat....
-I found a whale vertabra.

-A youngster is given a ride on a palm-leaf sled.
-Little girls munch pandanus nuts.
-A boy engages in his favorite pastime, playing with a spin made from a palm fond.

Raroia

CHAPTER ONE

Back To The South Seas

A letter — To the South Seas with the Kon-Tiki raft Raroia complex - A 6,000 miles journey - Tahiti as it is - The closed island group - Hunt tor a schooner - The story of the Chen Ho - Hurried departure - Two treasure-hunters and one missionary - The dangerous islands - Matchless navigation - Volcano or atoll? - Monsieur Homer on Fakarava Polynesian seamanship - Right through the breakers - An easy stranding - In the Raroia lagoon

ONE day there came a letter from French Oceania which, in translation, would run something like this:

Penetito Tane and Vahine. We greet you. Amen.

We send this short letter to ask why you do not come. We have waited and waited. Everything is ready for you. Come here, and we will fish on the reef at night and with harpoons in the lagoon every morning. There are plenty of turtles this year too. Bring your box for making pictures. Mairagi has had a baby and Teua is dead. But she was no longer good for much anyway. There are plenty of coconut palms and bread-fruit trees for you. Maruake planted a lemon tree for you too, but it died. Everyone will he glad when you come, and we will dance the kori haki *and the other dances. Send a letter and say when you are coming. We can now say* Couttemoro *(good morning) and* Couttenat *(good night). Amen.*

The letter was from the chief on Raroia, an insignificant little coral island in the Tuamotu group, which I had never heard of till I happened, with my five Norwegian comrades of the *Kon-Tiki* raft, to be cast ashore there one day at the beginning of August 1947. It was my first meeting with the South Seas, and it was overwhelming. The brilliant colours of the corals, the eternal roar of the surf, the play of the sun in the palm-tops, but above all the great silence and peace, made an indelible impression. For a fortnight we wandered about on the sun-steeped sands, fished and dived in the crystal-clear water of the lagoon, and danced and sang with merry, friendly Polynesians, who seemed without a trouble in the world except that we were going to leave them all too soon. We shared this trouble, but pressing duties awaited us somewhere on the other side of the globe, and with sorrow in our hearts we were at last compelled to hurry off.

During the months that followed, when city life became unbearable

and the damp and cold penetrated one's very soul, I often wished myself back on the sunny island of Raroia, where all seemed so happy and life so simple. Every time these radiant memories sprang up and made me dream of another and a better world, my reason told me that not even in the South Seas could life be so carefree and simple as it had seemed to us during our short stay.

It could not be so often that foreigners came on a visit, and the wreck of a raft on the island was certainly even more uncommon. We had seen our Raroia in a festal mood, and to build on our fleeting impressions would be about the same as to judge England by a national celebration or a royal jubilee. Others, with many years' experience of life on the South Sea islands, told depressing stories of the natives' treachery and assured me that life there was monotonous, hard, and dangerous. Yet the dream of the South Seas would not be banished from my mind, and when, about two years later, I had a chance of undertaking a new research expedition to French Oceania on my own account, I did not hesitate for a moment.

About the same time came the letter from the chief Teka. A long-forgotten promise, which was not even very seriously meant, was recalled to my mind. At a moment during the farewell party for us *Kon-Tiki* men on Raroia, when the music was at its most languishing and the scent from the wreath of flowers about my neck was especially powerful and intoxicating, Chief Teka had asked me if I would come back; and at such a moment, of course, it is not surprising that I had immediately and unhesitatingly assured him that I should come back as quickly as I could. The chief apparently to have taken the promise much more seriously than I had done, and after two years of waiting he had clearly no longer been able to restrain his impatience.

Soon another letter came, in which he wondered why I had not built a new raft and was not already en route for the South Seas with my *vahine* [wife]. In a special P. S. he advised us to take the Panama Canal route even if it were to cost more, as the route round Cape Horn would take too long. But however much I wrestled with the problem, it seemed to me impossible to return to Raroia. My new expedition had other tasks and objects, which made it necessary to be continually on the move, and I should certainly not get even a glimpse of Raroia.

While the preparations went slowly forward, the letters from Raroia continued to pour in, and my thoughts turned more and more often to the island and its merry inhabitants. To console myself, from time to time I took out the Chief Teka's letters and read them aloud to Marie-Thérèse. Of course we regarded it mainly as an amusement and distraction, knowing as we did that we had other and more important things to do than to fulfil my impossible promise. But one evening, when I had evidently put more

feeling and conviction into my reading than usual, Marie-Thérèse suddenly interrupted me and said:

"You've got 'Raroia complex' and I've got rheumatism. Why not try to get rid of these complaints before we start our ethnographical work in French Oceania in earnest? If we get off right now and stay on Raroia for, say, a few months, we shall be able to prepare for much of our coming work, and also to get to know the conditions and learn the language, which we must do anyhow. The conditions are pretty much the same everywhere in French Oceania, and we can as well take the introductory course at Raroia!"

She was right, of course, and at last we decided to go. Our programme was very simple. I had seen Raroia in a festive mood and found it very good. We should now have a taste of everyday life on Raroia, to discover in what respects existence there was better or worse than our own everyday life. We did not seek a primitive and 'natural' life in a complex virgin paradise - for the simple reason that it no longer existed, even on Raroia. What we wanted was quite simply to live for a time in a civilization other than our own, in other conditions, with another people which had other customs and another outlook on life, to see if we should make ourselves at home and if we should be able to appreciate the values in their way of life.

So it came about that one fine day at the beginning of April 1949 we stood on the quay at Papeete, the capital of French Oceania, surrounded by six cases of books, a gramophone, two suitcases full of winter clothes (we had come straight from the cold Northern winter), and countless other useful and useless belongings. We had no illusions about Tahiti, and knew quite well that the island's chief attractions were not its wild and primitive state, but rather the beauty of its scenery and its peace. The only really primitive thing in Tahiti, by the way, is the hotel at which we put up by mistake. It has twenty-eight wooden stalls ('rooms') painted pink, green, light blue, and grey, and had in all two wash-stands, of which one was unusable and the other was guarded by an incorruptible giant dog of doubtful breed.

But we paid no attention either to the horrible semi-civilization of the island or to the magnificence of its scenery, for to us Tahiti was only a halting-place where we were to make our final preparations and try to find a schooner which would take us to the Tuamotu islands. But we soon found out that the last stage of the journey would clearly be the most difficult.

The people whose advice we sought had all most hazy ideas of the Tuamotu islands and the shipping communications with them, and our intention of settling on Raroia, curiously enough, excited universal

amazement and horror. That we should of our own free will abandon Tahiti for a wretched little coral island was to most people incomprehensible, and all the dwellers on Tahiti we met looked at us as a Londoner would probably look at anyone who tried to persuade him of the advantages of living in a small town in the depths of East Anglia.

The most gloomy Tahitians also warned against a number of dangers and troubles. Heat apoplexy, shipwreck, man-eating sharks, lack of water, the treachery of the inhabitants, and cyclones were mentioned most frequently. One 'authority' crystallized all the objections in a crushing manner by saying with ill-concealed revulsion;

"Tuamotu - but, my dear fellow, they eat dogs there and ordinary drinking water costs twenty-five francs a bottle. . . ."

We soon found out that he had never set foot on any of the Tuamotu Islands, and it was the same with most of those who most emphatically advised us not to go there. The inhabitants of Tahiti are incredibly attached to their home, and there are even many who have never visited the neighbouring island Moorea, which lies nine miles to the west.

One administrator asked uneasily if we were short-sighted. Just after the end of the war a young Frenchman had tried to live an idyllic life on an atoll in the Tuamotu group. But as his sight was bad and he could neither use a harpoon or distinguish the inedible coconuts from the good ones, he was compelled to abandon the experiment after a few months and return to Papeete. Without fish and coconuts paradise is not possible on a Tuamotu island nor with them either, to be quite honest. We assured our friend the administrator that we did not intend to follow this example and, to be on the safe side, showed him our American army surplus equipment and our canned food.

Unfortunately we had not brought with us all that we needed, as we had hoped to be able to complete our equipment in Papeete. This was no doubt theoretically possible, but in practice our problems were infinitely complicated by the curious sales system practised by the Chinese in Papeete - most of the merchants being Chinese. No business is specialized; all of them sell anything that their own inclinations or the turn of affairs dictate, and it is not unusual to see such diverse goods as refrigerators, hats, cheese, razor blades, gramophone discs, spirits, padlocks, and rubber teats all mixed up in the dirty disorderly Chinese shops. In every shop we entered there was, of course, everything but what we wanted; so we ran about the town every day for several weeks, till our heads were awhirl with Chinese names like Wing, Sang, Man, Lung, Nam, Han, Ping, Pang, Pong. Eventually we collected almost everything we needed.

But this by no means ended our difficulties. Rather more than 450

miles still separated us from Raroia, and we had to find a boat calling at that particular island. A dozen schooners, none over 150 tons, visit the seventy-eight islands of the Tuamotu group to buy copra and mother-of-pearl and sell in exchange flour, gym shoes, hair oil, preserves, coloured cloth, smuggled spirits, and other necessaries of life.

On account of the comparatively small output of copra, competition is great, and owners are therefore unwilling to disclose the exact routes or sailing times (if any) of their schooners for fear that some competitor might snap up the copra from under their noses. The authorities have many times tried to regulate matters somewhat by ordering that announcements of all voyages should be put up at the post office in Papeete. The announcements certainly appear, but the correct routes and sailing times are hardly ever given. To obtain more reliable information we went down to the harbour, and after a little search succeeded in finding in a tavern a captain who declared that he was almost ready to sail on a fresh trip to the Tuamotu islands.

"Do you call at Raroia?" I asked hopefully.

"Raroia - let me see - well, you see, that depends on whether I get a full cargo of copra elsewhere or not."

"But if you've passengers for Raroia on board?"

"Well, if I do go to Raroia of course I land them there. If not, of course they have to come back to Papeete."

"Hm! How long does it take to get to Raroia - if you do call there?"

"That depends on which islands I call at first. Sometimes one gets there quickly, let's say in five or six days; sometimes it takes longer, perhaps a fortnight, perhaps more - and sometimes, as I said, we don't get there at all."

The schooners were evidently not intended for passenger traffic.

Somebody told us that the *Vaiete* usually called at Raroia. We hurried back to the harbour, but soon discovered that, first, the *Vaiete* usually visited a quite different part of the Tuamotu group, and secondly that the schooner had run on to a reef on Moorea a long time before, and that some mysterious 'spring tide' was awaited which would get her off. Of course the 'spring tide' never came.

We continued our researches with the willing help of the harbour-master, Louis Carlsson, and thanks to his exertions we at last succeeded in getting a promise from the *Denise's* owner that we should be landed on Raroia, whether the schooner was to fetch copra from there or not.

In the meantime the *Denise* was still cruising about among the Tuamotu islands, and days soon became weeks without anything being heard of the schooner. Then one day the news went round that she had sprung a leak and sunk out in the open sea. Unfortunately the rumour

proved to be only too true.

Long discussions about various schooners followed, until what was certainly the queerest ship and captain in the South Seas appeared and looked like solving our problem. One day the Frenchman de Bishop came to Papeete on board his Chinese junk *Chen Ho*. De Bishop is an adventurer of international rank who has sailed on all the seas, been a chief of police in China, been shipwrecked innumerable times, been a prisoner in Japanese hands, and had countless other unusual and interesting experiences. But he is best known for his daring voyage from Hawaii to France in 1935 - round the Cape of Good Hope! - in his Polynesian double canoe *Kaimiloa*.

De Bishop's new craft, however, was in many respects more curious than his double canoe. It was a Chinese luxury junk, originally built for the Archibold expedition, which carried out natural history research in the South Seas just before the last world war. After serving as a private residence and an officers' mess it had lately arrived in French Oceania, where de Bishop intended to use it for carrying copra.

Convinced that there must be plenty of copra on Raroia, as the island was so rarely visited, de Bishop kindly offered to call there on his proposed cruise among the Tuamotu Islands. We looked forward to the trip, for we should have to search for a long time to find a better boat than the *Chen Ho*. There was, however, a little 'but'. The junk was being converted into a cargo vessel, and despite daily promises that she would be ready 'next week' our departure remained as indefinite and remote as ever. As we wanted to leave Papeete before the gales began in November, we at last began to look round for another vessel.

The *Teretai* was our eventual salvation. The *Teretai* was no different from the other schooners except in one respect - she had cargo on board for Raroia. We stowed away our luggage and our two kittens (we had been told that there were plenty of rats in the Tuamotu islands) in a cabin, which for some unfathomable reason was called the saloon, and when we were ready it was so full that there was no room for ourselves. Everyone who had any experience of schooners in general and of the *Teretai* in particular assured us that we should be glad that this was so, for in the 'saloon' there was such a smell of rancid copra, petrol, and rotten flour as to give one a headache. We had no objection, therefore, to taking up our quarters on deck among some natives from the Marquesas islands, who immediately offered to show us how to arrange ourselves so as not to tumble overboard while asleep and generously gave us a share of a mysterious green pudding in a rusty bowl.

We hastened to say good-bye to our friends, though they all looked curiously distrustful when we told them that at last everything was ready

for the start. We soon understood why. The schooner was to sail "at 5 pm at latest." At six o'clock, however, the skipper declared that our sailing was postponed till nine. When we returned at nine after having again taken leave of our friends, who this time looked if possible even more dubious, not a soul was to be seen on board.

"Strike," explained an old Tahitian, who was sitting on the quay on one of the old guns which serve as bollards - surely one of the most sensible objects for which guns have ever been put to.

"Strike?" we burst out in astonishment.

"Yes," said the old man. "Sailors away long from Papeete. Will have fun when they are in port. Captain goes into bar and says, 'We'll go now,' Sailors shout: 'Clear out. We're having a good time here,' Many so drunk they can't answer at all. Sometimes it's captain who strikes, sometimes engineer or someone else."

The 'strike' lasted for another three days. After that there was a film with Tino Rossi in it, which all on board wanted to see, and that meant a further day's delay. We sensibly remained ashore in order not to get tired of the schooner before she had left Papeete, but every morning we went down to the harbour with our kittens under our arms to ask if and when the ship would sail. We were always met with the same regretful gestures and vigorous head-shakings.

We had almost given up hope when, by pure chance on the morning of the fifth day of waiting, we saw the sailors casting off the *Teretai's* mooring ropes. Still with our kittens under our arms we hurried down to the quay, where the crew seemed all of a sudden to be in a great hurry (they had all evidently run through their money) and we hardly got on board before the motors began to hum. An hour later we were already rocking out on the open sea on our way towards the Tuamotus' labyrinth of coral islands and reefs.

We looked round us and found that in the last twenty-four hours the schooner had been turned into a regular Noah's Ark. Ten pigs were crowded together in the bows, cocks and hens peered out here and there from under tarpaulins and cargo, and on the main deck two goats ran about at their will, playfully butting all who happened to come near them. The passengers consisted of our friends from the Marquesas islands, who ceaselessly chewed their mysterious pudding, two Tahitians who were going to search for a pirate's treasure on an uninhabited island, and a missionary in a light-blue cloak.

At the start the treasure-hunters were a trifle taciturn and secretive, which was not surprising, but the missionary was correspondingly cheerful and talkative and entertained us with harmonica music and good stories. Indeed the only thing which seemed to burden his mind was how

he was to make the believers of his district abandon the, in his view, barbaric custom of greeting and taking leave by kissing each other on the stomach, for he often returned to this gloomy topic. In spite of our somewhat different interests all the passengers soon became good friends, and it was not long before we were all rolling to and fro along the deck like brothers eagerly discussing the secrets of the Tuamotu islands, the immortality of the soul, and the fluctuations in the price of copra, while the *Terehai* slowly but surely ploughed her way through the rough seas and Tahiti sank into the ocean astern.

Ever since the Portuguese mystic and explorer Quiros sighted the first Tuamotu Islands some time at the beginning of 1606, the channels round these islands have rightly been considered among the most dangerous and difficult in the world. Characteristically enough, it has been impossible to establish with certainty which islands Quiros discovered. This is not only because the navigational methods of the seventeenth century were somewhat unreliable and Quiros often left it to the heavenly powers to fix his course; it is also due to the difficult geographical conditions. The Tuamotu Islands, which are all as like one another as peas, are in reality nothing but coral reefs rising from five to ten feet above sea level, almost impossible to discover until one is practically on top of them.

It is even more troublesome from the navigational point of view that many of these reefs never reach the surface, but form dangerous underwater shoals. It should be added that the ocean currents among the islands are strong and treacherous and that hurricanes are fairly common during the stormy season from December to March. Not without reason, therefore, have the islands been called the 'Dangerous Islands' and the 'Labyrinth.' (The official name Tuamotu may mean "far-away islands" or "the islands behind the back" [0f thr Tahitians], depending on the syllabication is formed. Another Polynesian name frequently used among the natives is *Puamotu*, which means "the conquered [or finished] islands.")

According to a popular joke in Tahiti, navigation among the Tuamotu islands is conducted as follows:

The captain says to the helmsman: "You see that cloud on the horizon. Steer on that."

Then he goes into his cabin and lies down and does not come on deck again till several hours later, when he says to the helmsman;

"The birds arc flying south-south-east. That means that there's land somewhere there. Follow them as well as you can."

Gradually land appears on the horizon as expected, and the skipper comes out after another forty winks and says:

"Let me see, there's an entrance with two rocks in the middle, that

must be Tahanea."

Or he says: "No palms on the south side. That must be Toau."

And if by any chance he does not recognize the island, he simply goes ashore and asks where it is.

Fortunately it *does* really happen almost like this. I say fortunately, because if anyone tried to use a sextant and steer a course by the chart he would soon come up against insuperable difficulties and dangers. The latest chart - if the term chart can be used for a badly drawn map with some haphazard deep sea soundings - dates from 1839 is unreliable, to say the least, A number of alterations and additions have naturally been made during the last hundred years, but they do not increase its usefulness. Most of them run like this with variations only as regards dates and distances:

> This island was reported in 1862 to lie five miles farther east than the position stated. In 1911 it was reported to lie considerably farther north, longitude uncertain.

The little information contained in the navigational handbooks is also most often erroneous or misleading. The well-known handbook *Sailing Directions*, for example, for a long time contained a note to this effect on one of the islands in the Tuamotu group:

> *Tepoto*. The island appears to be of volcanic origin and the shores project over or run steeply down into the sea. A depression in the middle of the island, which without doubt is an extinct crater, forms a natural basin, which is often filled with rain water. The soil, which consists of humus, is very rich, but methods of cultivation are primitive and the return is small. Some fifty natives visit the island from time to time. Of all the islands in the Tuamotu group Tepoto is perhaps the only one which affords a good anchorage, where the schooners can find shelter from the south-easterly gales.

Not till 1938(!) was this note altered, and the gist of it was then as follows:

> *Tepoto*. A small coral island which appears to have been filled and lifted up by a volcanic explosion on the sea bottom. The ground is covered with a layer of crushed corals and strewn with large coral blocks deposited in the sea by the cyclone of 1906. The island is 13 to 16 feet in height and is covered with coconut trees which reach a height of about 60 feet above the sea. The island is inhabited by about fifty natives, who live almost exclusively on fish and turtles and drink nothing but coconuts, although there are two wells of saliferous water. There is no anchorage at all, and it is only with difficulty that the schooners find uncertain shelter on the west side of the island.

It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the Tuamotu skippers regard sextants, logs, chronometers, and handbooks with a certain mistrust and prefer to rely on the large collection of unwritten but exact observations which generations of skippers have left to posterity. This traditional

knowledge and their personal experiences over many years tell them, for example, between which islands there are ocean currents and in what direction they go, how deep the entrances are at the different islands, when it is high tide and low tide, how the wind changes with the seasons, and a thousand other things which are not in any books and the knowledge of which is much more important than any ingenious instruments and tables.

The captain of the *Teretai* was comparatively young, but he had already mastered most of the subtleties of Tuamotu navigation and showed himself supremely confident when on the first night he ran between two islands, divided by a strait which was only two or three miles wide.

"It's a simple matter to hear from the roar of the surf how far one is from land," he explained, "When the noise is equally loud from both sides naturally I am in the middle of the strait, and if one listens properly there's no difficulty in keeping a course."

I listened long and attentively, and at last it seemed to me that we were surrounded by breakers.

"So we are, nearly," said the captain, smiling. "Just at the moment we are in a big bay. There are one or two dangerous reefs in the middle of the strait just north of us, which it is best to keep away from. But we shall soon go back to our old course. If one listens properly there's no difficulty."

The captain of the *Teretai* at any rate seemed to have no difficulty in piloting the schooner past all the coral islands and reefs despite the pitch-darkness.

Next morning we steered in through the entrance to Fakarava, one of the largest islands in the Tuamotu group. On the narrow strip of beach on the eastern side of the immense lagoon, which is about fifty miles long and fifteen miles wide, we caught sight of a few red roofs among the coconut palms. This was the village of Rotoava, where the supercargo (the schooner's clerk or business man) hoped to find a few tons of copra. When we came nearer we were able to count about thirty houses and two churches along the shore. But not a living soul was to be seen anywhere. We went ashore. Still just as empty and desolate. Most of the houses seemed to be abandoned and many were tumble-down or neglected.

At last, near the end of the one street in the village, we found a house whose door stood open. We looked in and found an old woman and a few small children, who to our astonishment announced that Monsieur Homer would come in a minute. Monsieur Homer, a little man with tired eyes, proved to be the island's merchant. To our great astonishment he received us as if we had been long-awaited friends, and led us with much ceremony to a large cement house which lay a little way from the others. The house

consisted of one single room with bare cement walls. In the middle of the floor stood a little round table with four stools round it.

"One does the best one can," said our host, and invited us to sit down.

He disappeared for a moment and returned with two bottles of American export beer.

"One does the best one can," he repeated, and opened one of the bottles of beer. It had a dubious colour and also was warm.

"One does the best one can," he said yet again, "but it isn't enough. Fakarava is done for, the Tuamotus are done for. The islands are desolate or are being abandoned. Just think that on Fakarava there are two hundred persons. Two hundred persons on an island where there is room for many thousands. But no one will stay. They all go oft to Papeete. Look into the bars in Papeete. You'll find the inhabitants of Fakarava there. Sometimes, now and then, when they want money, they come here and make a little copra, but then they disappear again. How many islands are there in the Tuamotu group? Seventy-eight! How many natives are there on these seventy-eight islands? Four thousand five hundred! Of these two thousand live on Rangiroa, Anaa, and Takaroa. That leaves two thousand five hundred on seventy-five islands. That makes thirty-three inhabitants on each island - thirty-three inhabitants!"

He stared gloomily down into his cloudy beer. We were beginning to understand him better. It looked as if he lacked customers.

"You are emigrants from Europe who think of settling on one of the islands, I understand," he continued. "Why don't you stay here? You need society, and so do I for that matter. The last time I had a visit from any *popaa* [the usual term for a white man in French Oceania] was at the beginning of the war, when Admiral Byrd came off in a plane from his aircraft carrier which was passing through the Tuamotu group. He had a jeep in the plane and drove right up to the house here, without so much as even looking at the other houses." (I began to understand where the beer came from.) "But he left next day. There was a French woman journalist here too - in 1930 I think it was - who was going to write a book about Robert Louis Stevenson. The last visitor before her was Stevenson himself, but that was in my father's time. If you stay you can have his house. It's still standing."

Now we understood him completely. He not only lacked customers but was sick for human society. We were going to Raroia, however, and had no reason to stop half-way. To be quite honest, we felt a little depressed as we sat at the little table in the middle of the great bare room and looked out through the empty windows and doors at the ruined houses and the moss-grown village street. Still, to please Monsieur Homer, we praised both the cement house and the beer as well as we could and took

our leave.

"One does the best one can," our host said with true Homeric wisdom, and lapped up with surprising relish the last draught of warm beer as we we were going out the door.

We were tossing on the sea again, this time with our course set for Takume, sister island to Raroia. As the wind was blowing freshly from the north-east, the captain ordered sail to be set. Like the rest of the schooners, the *Teretai* was a two-master which, with a favourable wind, used her sails in order slightly to improve the motors' modest five knots. While the cook took over the helm, the deck hands unfurled the sails, and a couple of the passengers got hold of the sheets and pulled and hauled. There was no strict distinction between crew and passengers on board the *Teretai*; anyone who was willing to help took a turn at the helm or helped to manoeuvre the vessel.

All regarded this quite as a matter of course, for the simple reason that all Polynesians are first-class seamen, whether they are professional sailors or not. It is significant that the Tuamotu skippers never take any crew with them when they go to San Francisco to fetch or buy boats. They simply make the rounds of the doss-houses and shelters and collect the Polynesians they find. They can alwa3re be sure that as soon as they have found a Polynesian they have found a seaman as well.

The only post impossible to fill in this way is that of engineer, for the Polynesians in general take very little interest in noisy complicated motors, but it looks as if one of the Tuamotu skippers had recently found a good solution of this problem. When he last bought a boat at San Francisco he appointed as engineer an ex-cook, on the supposition (which later proved to be quite correct) that even if his mechanical knowledge was nil he would at least be able to bear the heat in the engine-room. This experiment, according to what the *Teretai's* captain told me, seems to have been repeated with success by many Tuamotu skippers in the island traffic also.

On Fakarava a competitor had already got in first, but on Takume the captain hoped to have better luck. Like most of the islands in the eastern part of the Tuamotu group, Takume has no entrance to the lagoon and therefore, it will be easily understood, is considerably less attractive to the Tuamotu skippers. We soon found out what the lack of an entrance into the lagoon meant in the way of difficulties and dangers.

When we approached Takume on the morning of the fourth day after our departure, the wind was still in the north-east. Although we were still in the lee of the island the sea was astonishingly heavy, and a huge swell was breaking in thunder against the reef, which stretched without a break as far as we could see in both directions. Nearest the land the reef was as

smooth and level as a floor and the water not more than a foot deep. About fifty yards from the beach it suddenly plunged steeply down towards the depths and formed a huge wall, which the waves in their ceaseless assaults had torn and mutilated. It was here that the largest and most dangerous breakers were formed. Only about ten yards outside this wall of coral the sea was already so deep that the *Teretai* could find no anchor-hold, but was compelled to ride upon the swell with her engine running.

"There is the landing-place," said the supercargo, pointing in towards the island.

We had expected to see a wharf or some kind of harbour, but the waves broke just as violently and the reef was just as sharp at the place the supercargo had pointed out as everywhere else along the coast. The inhabitants of Takume, however, were clearly of the same opinion as he, for they soon assembled on the beach at the so-called landing-place and began to semaphore that they had copra. So far all was well. But how were we going to get it on board?

This did not seem to be anything of a problem to the *Teretai's* experienced crew. To our amazement the sailors calmly got into one of the ship's boats - a stout, heavy thing, just twice as long as she was broad - and took their places at the oars, while the coxswain took his astern. Not wanting to miss any interesting experiences, we hastened to jump into the boat, and were soon on our way in towards the seething witches' cauldron at a good speed. We stopped a little way from the breakers and rode on the waves.

"This is just like surf-riding," the coxswain yelled in my ear. "We have to wait for a big wave and try to hang on to it."

One wave after another passed, but the coxswain did not seem to be satisfied with them. After a long wait a huge wall of foaming water rose up. This was evidently the right wave.

"Now! now!" the coxswain bellowed, and the sailors flung themselves over their oars and pulled till their backs creaked.

Suddenly we were lifted straight up in the air as swiftly as if we had been in an American express lift. Evidently the wave had reached us. The sailors pulled like mad, and high up on the hissing, foaming wave-top we rode in towards the reef at breakneck speed. I peeped out over the boat's side. Far behind us I saw the *Teretai's* heaving deck, and right in front of and under us I saw the shining red wall of jagged coral which lay quite bare. In the next minute the wave washed over the coral reef, and we were gracefully swept in high above it towards the beach, where a few of the laughing natives stood ready and caught hold of the boat.

While the sailors were beginning to load the copra we took a short look round. Takume is one of the most famous mother-of-pearl islands in

the Tuamotu group, and hundreds of natives from the whole of French Oceania gather there annually for a few months to dive for mother-of-pearl mussels. Our visit took place in the off-season, and the inhabitants of the island, some fifty natives, seemed to be mainly occupied in resting for the next season. There were not more than twenty sacks of copra, and that was about what the ship's boat would hold.

As on the inward trip, to return to the schooner we had to wait for the right moment, which this time naturally came when a specially powerful wave recoiled and the water streamed out for a short time. This time, however, the difficulties were considerably greater. The boat was heavily loaded and therefore a good deal slower and more awkward to handle. The risk of its being caught fast on the coral bottom was great. Even if we succeeded in escaping this danger we were still far from safe. The most critical stage of the manoeuvre was just when the outgoing stream met the first wave. Then we had not only to withstand it but also force the boat right through it.

On top of the sacks of copra Marie-Thérèse and I clung tightly while the sailors took hold of the bulwarks and waded out with the boat to the extreme edge of the reef just inside the breakers. One wave after another came and went, and we thought an eternity had passed before the coxswain at last decided to risk a try. He hopped nimbly up into the boat, and the sailors followed as quick as lightning and flung themselves at the oars. We had started. Suddenly there was a crunching noise on the bottom, and the boat stopped with a jerk. We all tumbled down in a heap, and the boat turned broadside on to the surf. Just as I had crawled up again I saw a gigantic wave approaching swiftly from the sea outside. Before the sailors could swing the boat on to her right course again the wave was over us, and we disappeared in the foaming masses of water. When it drew back we were all sitting together in a foot of water by the beach and staring at one another in astonishment, while the ship's boat bumped against the coral bottom a little farther off on the reef. Half the sacks of copra had tumbled out.

"Little accidents like this always happen," said the coxswain, laughing loudly, "but it doesn't matter. We've only to collect the sacks and try again. As for the boat, she'll stand any number of bumps, for she’s got an extra layer of thick planks on her bottom, which we change every time we are at Papeete."

The sailors, laughing and joldng, got the boat ready again, and we had another try. This time all went well.

About half the Tuamotu islands have no entrance, and all loading and unloading on them, therefore, is done in this way. Whether all goes well depends more than anything on the coxswain's judgment and skill, and

therefore a coxswain in a Tuamotu schooner has great prestige and is always well paid. But the landing always takes place on the side which, not without a certain degree of exaggeration, is called the lee side, and it really seems that the only vessel which has managed to effect a landing on the windward side of a Tuamotu island without being smashed to pieces is the *Kon-Tiki* raft.

Takume is only six miles from Raroia, and the *Teretai's* captain decided to go straight there. This meant that we should have to grope our way in through the entrance in the middle of the night. I knew from earlier experience that navigation in the entrance, only fifty yards wide, was very difficult, principally on account of a quantity of huge coral blocks which transform it into a regular labyrinth. The captain, however, had an important reason for proceeding at once.

"If I don't take my chance tonight, when the sea rises and the water streams into the lagoon, I shall have to wait till the next high tide, and that means that I should lose twelve hours," he explained. "For that matter, I've gone in at night many times before."

We arrived at Raroia about ten o'clock at night, just as we had sat down in the main deck at a table loaded with roast pork, rice, and ship's biscuits. The captain was equal to the navigationb legends, for while the *Teretai* was cautiously feeling her way in through the entrance at low speed, to our astonishment he climbed up on to the cabin roof with his plate, and sat down before an empty case under the ship's light. Masticating vigorously, he calmly piloted the schooner past all the shoals and submerged reefs, so confident and unconcerned that he did not lay down his knife or fork for a moment. On the contrary, they seemed to have a special duty to fulfil. A sign to the man at the wheel with the fork meant 'port a little' and a sign with the knife 'starboard a little*.

As soon as we were through the entrance the captain sought out a huge coral shoal which reached almost to the surface, and ordered the schooner to be moored there. It was not more than another mile or two to the village of Ngarumaoa on the western side of the island, but as the captain was not so much at home inside the lagoon as in the entrance he preferred to keep the schooner stationary until the morning. We were tired after the day's experiences and fell asleep at once. When we were wakened next morning by the sun in our eyes, the engines were running already and the village was in sight. We had at last reached the goal of our dreams.

CHAPTER TWO

Here Is Our Country

The population receives us - A Swedish song of welcome House of our parents by adoption - Curious soup - Presents Evening entertainment — The Raroia song - The Kon-Tiki palm - A suicide that failed - Polynesian meals - 'My name is Isidor' - Tuamotuan and Tahitian - Woman and dollar problems - Our first church-going - A gramophone programme - Excursion to the lagoon islands — A mysterious shipwreck Different kinds of preserves - Fish à la Raroia - Letter to jack - Buckets of fish - Coconut football - An ancient legend — The land of the cool winds

WE had hardly dropped anchor off the village when a swarm of brown Polynesians in bright-coloured clothes and loin-cloths appeared among the palms. Soon the whole population was assembled on the little quay of rough-hewn coral blocks, and from where we stood on the cabin roof we could plainly see the vice-chief and master of the ceremonies, Tupuhoe, running about and giving instructions to his singers and guitar players.

Just as we were getting into the ship's boat which was to take us ashore the little party struck up a song of welcome. It gave me a start. The tune seemed so curiously familiar. I listened again. Surely it was a Swedish song which we had sung to the islanders in 1947, when they had asked us, the raft's crew, to sing the 'Kon-Tiki Song'. Evidently some of the Raroia musicians had learned the melody with surprising ease and incorporated it in their repertory of old Polynesian songs and hymns.

Tupuhoe was so moved that he was compelled to wipe his eyes again and again, and all the hundred inhabitants of the island formed a long queue to say *ia ora na* and shake hands. Most of them even seemed so glad to see us that as soon as they had greeted us they hurried back to the end of the queue and repeated the whole ceremony. When the 'official' reception was over our friends divided all the luggage among them and formed a long caravan which wound away along the village street. Tupuhoe, the chief Tdca, and we followed. The whole party disappeared into a large wooden house with a newly painted galvanized iron roof.

"Your house," said Teka. "The only house with a firm cement foundation. The other houses are easily blown away when there is a storm. You are not accustomed to that. Best for you to take this one."

"Whose house is it?" I asked.

"Whose is it?" Teka said in astonishment; "Why, it belongs to your father-by-adoption."

I had most certainly been adopted by Rauri and Taupua during my first visit, but I had taken it only as a mark of politeness, as a survival of an old Polynesian custom without any obligations or implications. We soon found, however, that my parents by adoption saw the matter in quite a different light. In their view both Marie-Thérèse and I were as firmly attached to the family as all the other children - who, by the way, were also adopted! - and Rauri regarded it as a matter of course that we should take over one of his finest houses, which he had once built in his youth, when he was a successful mother-of-pearl diver and wanted thoroughly to impress the rest of the inhabitants of Raroia. The house was of first-class American pine-wood and had both doors and windows with proper glass panes. It was also most carefully pointed out to us that it was one of the two houses on Raroia which had an inner roof and thus kept out the worst of the blistering heat.

We collected our luggage in one of the rooms and asked the carriers to go into the other. The rest of the population sat down on the veranda, with the exception of some of the children, who climbed up into a tree to have a better view of what we were doing.

While we were still undecidedly contemplating the huge pile of luggage with the two mewing kittens on top of it, and answering to the best of our power the inquisitive questions of the Raroia people as to the use of all the queer things we had with us, Taupua came and announced that dinner was ready. She had prepared in our honour a European dish, or rather what she thought was a European dish. In the middle of the great long table in front of our "parents'" house stood a large bowl of tomato soup. So far so good; but to improve the taste Taupua had evidently made a clean sweep of the larder, and on stirring it a little we found not only small sausages, potatoes, and mushrooms, but also pieces of a carelessly cut-up fowl and a whole fish which looked as if it had accidentally fallen into the soup and been drowned.

While Rauri ladled out the soup, Teka asked how our king [of Sweden] was. We replied in detail, for we knew that his interest was genuine and keen. He then proceeded to inquire politely, as became a good Polynesian, about the health of all the princes and princesses and finally went over to district chiefs, minor potentates, and relations! We replied to the best of our power and drew a genealogical table in the sand. Tupuhoe wanted to hear about the conditions in *popaa* land - i.e. the white men's country, generally signifying both Europe and America - in rather greater detail, and we naturally did our best to give as truthful and

comprehensible an account as possible. But what they heard seemed to confirm their worst suspicions, for Rauri summed up the impression we had given as follows:

"But it's just as it is in Tahiti. Many pay just to live in a house, and they actually *sell* fish there." There was general laughter among the audience at these degenerate customs. "Many look at the clock to see when they shall work and others perhaps have no work at all. You were sensible to come here. Here there is always food for all, and one works only if one wants to."

When we returned to our fine wooden house, we found almost the whole population assembled outside the door. Practically all had with them some kind of gift, which they presented to us with many smiles and handshakes. Most of the gifts were surprisingly modern and consisted, for example, of a loaf of bread, a jar of preserves, or a bottle of beer, but the actual custom of giving presents is of great antiquity in Polynesia. One should not immediately give something else in exchange, but courtesy demands that one shall repay the kindness later when some suitable opportunity offers itself, or, if one receives great quantities of gifts, that one shall at once distribute them among all those present. We therefore immediately shuffled the pile of gifts and dealt them out again, naturally taking good care that the person who had given us the bottle of beer got a loaf of bread, he who had given a loaf a jar of preserves, and so on. They all seemed noticeably pleased with our good manners and gladly helped us to put the house in order for the rest of the afternoon.

Before the sun had set a remarkable concert began. Someone struck up a song far away on the outskirts of the village; others joined in, and soon the whole village resounded with singing and music. In a short time we heard the singing and music beginning to move farther off and the voices gradually blending into one great choir. The sound now came from a certain point some way off along the lagoon. We followed it, and found almost the whole population squatting in front of the village assembly house, the largest building in the village. Round a great paraffin lamp on the veranda sat about ten young boys with guitars on their knees, and a little way off sat a group of women, singing. These were the best guitar-players and female singers in the village. The rest of the Raroians sat below the veranda in the darkness, and we took our places among them.

The music had for a long time been sad and languishing, but quite unexpectedly it changed and became fiery and sensual. A shadow detached itself from the great dark mass of spectators and Tehei stood in the middle of the dancing floor. To the audible delight of all he began to whirl in a solo dance, obviously improvised for the occasion. More of the spectators became visible in the light from the paraffin lamp, and soon all

had overcome their shyness. The vehement unrestrained dance went on for a good half hour, till at last it began to die down. The guitar-players seemed to have lost control somewhat, for the music became uncertain and fumbling.

"Now there'll be some *popaa* music in your honour," one of our neighbours explained. And soon indeed the music became more and more dragging and plaintive, and the more it lost of its Polynesian character the less at home the dancers seemed. None of them could dance any modern dance properly, but all did their best to imitate the people they had seen in the Papeete dance halls, and by degrees many of them succeeded in looking just as bored as their European prototypes, even if the steps were rather confusing. The dancer who showed the greatest ability was Kainui, but that was presumably because he was the only one who had shoes. While the bare feet of the others often moved a good deal quicker than the music, Kainui's solid twelves helped him to keep time.

To the relief of everyone, however, the dance programme was only an introduction to a far more interesting entertainment, to Polynesian community singing which was most remarkable at least in two respects; most of the songs were hundreds of years old and all the singers knew the words by heart. The musicians laid their guitars aside and joined the choir, whose mighty voice rose and fell as rhythmically as the waves which washed the shore of the lagoon. We listened, fascinated, to ancient religious hymns the meaning of which had long been lost, to many languishing *teki* or "love songs"; to war songs and triumphal songs.

When we asked our friends to sing a song about Raroia the choice seemed to be simple and self-evident. While the shadows in the moonlight grew longer and longer and the night ever cooler and more delicious, the Raroians struck up a song which may have been the same that their forefathers sang hundreds of years before, when they first saw the island rise out of the sea:

> Followed by white terns
> Steers the canoe
> Through the rainbow's gate
> Towards the land,
>
> Raroia is found,
> This is Raroia,
> The land of the cool winds.
>
> The song of joy mingles
> With the noise of the breakers.
> Here is our country.

We could hardly have wished for a more beautiful and cordial "home-

coming" reception!

Next morning we were wakened by a curious singing noise. The wind blowing through the cracks in the wall, no doubt, we thought, and went to sleep again. A little later we were wakened by the same sound, and this time it seemed to come from the veranda. "There's someone on the veranda," whispered Marie-Thérèse.

Before we had decided to investigate the mystery further, the door was thrown open and Rauri's round plump figure stood out against the light background of galvanized iron, glittering and shining in the morning sun. He announced with a friendly smile that coffee was ready!

After breakfast Teka came and wondered if we would not go for a walk with him, to which we naturally had no objection. Evidently there was something special he wanted to show us, for we had hardly got out of the 'main street' of the village - an avenue 300 yards long bordered by coconut palms - than he set off at such a pace that it was all we could do to keep up with him, and the long trail of children which had clung to us faithfully all the morning was left far behind. We soon found out what it was he was in such a hurry to show us. He stopped in front of the fine assembly house and pointed with pride to a coconut palm about three feet high. It was there we had planted one of the Peruvian coconuts we had had with us on board the *Kon-Tiki* raft.

"At first it seemed to have difficulty in taking root," said Teka. "But then I put up a fence and began to water it, and that did good at once. Perhaps you'll be able to pick coconuts from it before you go."

"How long will that be?"

"Oh, six or seven years perhaps, but that doesn't matter. You can stay as long as you like. My grandfather came from Tahiti as a passenger on board a schooner. He was going to the Marquesas Islands to manage a copra plantation, but he liked Raroia so much that he got off here. He stayed for thirty-seven years. Temake's father was put ashore by a Chilean ship for some reason, and he stayed for good. Neither of them had any money to begin with, but when they died they had big copra plantations. You may do still better, for you've got a palm to start with."

"Do you get many visits from *popaa*?" I asked Teka, as we turned back at a leisurely pace along the shore of the lagoon.

"No. Before you came on the raft I can only remember three pleasure yachts, and since you only the *Starling* has been here."

We had heard a lot of talk about the *Starling* at Papeete, but it was not till now that with Teka's help we were able to reconstruct the whole tragic story, which testified that I was clearly not the only person who had been seduced by Raroia's charm. The owner of this pleasure yacht was an

American weary of civilization, who, in his distress at not finding in Tahiti the natural paradise he was seeking, tried to commit suicide on board his yacht in Papeete harbour by taking too strong a dose of sleeping-draught. A zealous customs officer who was making an extra inspection of the yacht found him, and after he had been treated with a stomach pump at the hospital the authorities hastily cancelled his *permit de séjour* in order to get rid of him. With the idea that he might be able to execute his plan better in peace and quiet somewhere among the Tuamotu islands, he steered east, and chance brought him just to Raroia.

The result, however, was quite different from what he had intended. A short stay among the merry Raroians restored to him his joy in living, and after a few weeks more among them he found that they were living just the life he had dreamt of and decided to stay on the island for good. As he was not prepared for such a turn of affairs and equipped for a settler's life, he decided to go back to America to get timber, cement, domestic utensils, tools, and everything else that was needed by a settler on a coral island. On the way back, however, he encountered a gale and was wrecked.

Teka added sadly that a ship's captain found his body some time afterwards. In one of the pockets there was a sketch of his new house and a list of the equipment he had meant to buy.

The same singing noise from Rauri's paraffin stove announced that coffee was ready and that a new day awaited us. We had decided to try to get up a little earlier so as to get in ahead of Rauri, but he had evidently been too clever for us.

While we continued our unpacking we were besieged by a large party of children, extremely inquisitive and athirst for knowledge. A little girl who had kept with us ever since we landed evidently considered herself already a *popaa* specialist, for she acted as guide to the others and made professional comments as she exhibited us and the other interesting features of the house. By giving her a slab of chocolate we won her over to our side, and when she exchanged the roles and began instead to exhibit her friends to us and tell us their nicknames the crowd scattered quickly. Some of the older people, who had never seen a white woman at close quarters before, also arrived, but they all asked me politely if they might see Marie-Thérèse before they began their inspection.

Temake had a long and eloquent argument with Rauri as to who should invite us to dinner, and at last won the day. To our great joy Temake and his wife Tehetu had no ambition to serve queer foreign dishes, but invited us to a genuine Polynesian meal. The first course consisted of raw fish, dipped in salt water and coconut sauce. This was followed by pork roasted in the oven, grilled pork, boiled pork, and pork

cut up into small pieces and fried. Further, for the sake of variety, anyone who wished could have a little bacon in between. Roasted bread-fruit and sweet potatoes were served with the meat.

Then came the fish dishes. Of course there was roast fish and boiled fish, big fish and small fish, lagoon fish and sea fish, and all were extraordinarily good eating. Temake filled his mouth full and spat the cleaned bones on to his plate one by one very neatly. We did our best to imitate him, but had difficulty in attaining the same sureness of aim. After the last fish we all felt rather gorged, so Tehetu gave us each a coconut to wash down the many dishes and make us ready to attack the sweet course, which was *poe*. This is one of the greatest delicacies on the Polynesian bill of fare; real *poe* is made of breadfruit and starch, which is kneaded together and boiled. The *poe* which Temake set on the table was made according to all the rules and therefore, like all real *poe*, was, to say the least, filling.

The rest of the day we spent on our backs in a state of semi-consciousness. Towards evening Temake came round, fit and cheerful, and invited us to help finish up the remains of the dinner, but we were obliged to refuse, as we could not move.

Next Morning Rauri again won the race for the paraffin stove and had coffee ready when we woke.

Immediately afterwards Varoa, the former chief of the village, came to call on us, dressed in a sun-helmet and a red tie. According to all the people in the village he is the oldest man on Raroia, but no one knows exactly how old he is, for he was born long before the white men began to write down in a big book such, from the Polynesian point of view, quite unimportant things as the day and year of a man's birth. He pressed my hands with astonishing strength, looked straight into my eyes, and said quite unexpectedly (in English):

"My name is Isidor, one, two, three!"

He then greeted Marie-Thérèse in the same way, pressed our hands again, and slowly withdrew, followed with admiring looks by the Raroians.

I suspect that Varoa-Isidor can seldom put his linguistic knowledge - acquired at Papeete some time in the seventies - to any practical use, but it is enough, anyway, to give him an envied position as the only English-speaking person in the village. Of the other Raroians, Tufaka, who was at school in Papeete for four years, speaks French quite fluently; Chief Teka has a pretty good knowledge of the language, though he often confuses *l* and *r*, like most Polynesians - and there are two other men who know a few single words. That is all. The rest talk a mixture of Tuamotuan and Tahitian, which are kindred dialects of the great Polynesian mother

tongue.

The Tuamotu dialect was originally about as different from Tahitian as French from Spanish, but the numerous trips to Papeete and regular contact with business men, missionaries, and the crews of schooners - who all spoke Tahitian - have left their mark strongly on the Raroians' language and levelled out the differences. Nowadays at any rate all those under fifty speak a mixture of Tahitian and Tuamotuan, and according to the villagers themselves there are only a handful of old people who speak something like a pure Tuamotu dialect. Teka even assures us that the difference between the youngest and oldest generations has already become so great that boys and girls often find it hard to understand their grandparents!

It does not, therefore, matter much to us that there is no grammar or dictionary of the Tuamotu dialect. We get on well with the vocabulary we have acquired during our six months in Tahiti and with the school-books in Tahitian which we were able to obtain with great difficulty. These school-books consist of a complicated grammar, abounding in such phrases as 'Homer wrote the Iliad', and a lexicon, half the words in which are medical or poetical terms, so that its utility is unfortunately rather limited.

To fill this gap we have begun to draw up a supplementary list of words, and the good people of Raroia are so interested in this work that they assemble round us in large crowds as soon as we appear with our books. Most of them are so eager to tell us the names for everything that they interrupt one another all the time, and the only difficulty hitherto has been to get them to stop. To be sure of making as quick progress as possible we have, further, engaged Tufaka as teacher and interpreter.

By getting up at five o'clock we at last managed to be ahead of Rauri, and when, a little later, he came creeping in to arrange our breakfast we were able instead to bid him sit down at a fully laid table. Despite his vigorous protests that it was only his duty, as a good father-by-adoption, to prepare our breakfast every morning, we at last succeeded in persuading him that there must be a limit even to kindness and helpfulness. As he would not leave us without making himself useful in some way, for the rest of the day he helped us put the house in order. He was so thoughtful that he even nailed up pieces of galvanized iron everywhere where he thought there was a draught, and as there were plenty of holes and cracks he left behind a rather complicated but not positively ugly iron mosaic.

People of the village were greatly astonishment at Marie-Thérèse cooking and doing housework. The popular view among the Raroians is that white women never work. A big man of about thirty named Maono, who had been for a long time on one of the small islands on the other side

of the lagoon and only came to the village today, looked in in the evening to obtain confirmation of the strange rumour.

"Are there many women in *popaa* land?" he asked with interest.

We assured him that there were many more than on all the islands in French Oceania put together, which made a great impression on him.

"It's a pity that I'm a Taumotu man," he said, "for if I wasn't I should be able to marry a *popaa* woman."

"But what's wrong with the Raroia girls?" I wondered.

"There's nothing wrong with them except that they don't stay on Raroia. They go to Tahiti and marry some Tahitian or other. It's the same on all the islands round here. All the prettiest girls go to Papeete, If they don't get married they sit about in the bars. Some sailor with plenty of money always comes along. There are five of us here on Raroia who can't find wives."

"But if there are so many women in Papeete, why don't you go there and get one? There must be many who have got tired of life in Papeete."

"No, they never get tired of it. They can dance, drink, and amuse themselves for ever. To be able to marry nowadays one must live in Papeete and have dollars, plenty of dollars...."

Clearly some of the Raroians' problems are surprisingly modern and familiar.

On our first Sunday on the island, the church bells summoned us to Mass at 7:00 A.M. With the exception of some few Mormons the Raroians are good Catholics, and several days in advance most of them reminded us delicately of the Sunday service and the importance of not missing it. Marie-Thérèse and I decided to be among the first, but when we arrived at the church at the second bell it appeared that instead we were the last. The whole population was assembled outside the entrance, and we soon learnt that it was good form to be at the church while the first bell was being rung!

All were dressed in their best clothes, which were starched and pressed in every possible and impossible place, and many had even put on shoes, which undeniably testified to a genuine spirit of penitence, for the Raroians always go barefoot on week-days and suffer great pain whenever they have to force their feet into a pair of leather cases. As soon as the ringer caught sight of us he began to sound the bell afresh, and the whole crowd immediately hurried into the church, which was pleasantly cool with its thick walls of coral cement. All had their fixed places, the women on the right and the men on the left, the children right in front and the old people right at the back.

Since no priest and the service therefore consisted entirely of hymns

and prayers, in Latin and Tahitian alternately. There was a happy friendly atmosphere about this service, as there is about everything the Polynesians do, and both hymns and prayers had a curious undertone of rejoicing. After three-quarters of an hour the service ended as suddenly as it had begun, and all trooped out in good order, first the old men, then the other grown men and boys and last the women and girls, likewise in order of age.

The rest of the day was quietly spent in doing absolutely nothing. At the general request we got out our portable gramophone and entertained the islanders with a short programme. Our records of genuine Tahitian and Hawaiian music were of course by far the most popular. Then came the cowboy songs, which is quite understandable, as the instruments and rhythm are roughly the same as in the Raroians' own music. The South American rumba and samba records went all right; on the other hand Armstrong, Ellington, Goodman, and the other jazz kings simply bored the listeners. But the classical music we tried - including Grieg, Chopin, Ravel, and a few symphonies - had an even worse reception. Some laughed and many went away!

Our new friend Maono and his comrade Tehei came early this morning and asked if we would accompany them on a trip over to the other side of the lagoon. Of course this suited us excellently, and we flung a few tins of preserves into a haversack and put on our dark spectacles.

"Leave the sack at home," said Tehei. "We're providing the food today. It'll be real Raroia food too."

Tehei's sailing canoe lay in readiness down on the beach. It was 25 feet long, 3 feet wide, and, like all Polynesian craft, had a large outrigger which was fastened to the hull by a strong cross-beam forward and a branch of solid but supple wood aft.

On account of the lack of proper timber on the Tuamotu islands, the canoes were made in old times of a number of small wooden planks, many not more than a foot or so wide; holes were laboriously bored in these and they were bound together with fibre ropes to make large hulls. These 'sewn' canoes, as they are called, disappeared long ago, and nowadays imported pine planks are used. The sails, which in pre-European times were made of plaited pandanus leaves, have also long been of modem cut and material.

While Marie-Thérèse and I stretched ourselves out on the narrow deck Tehei and Maono took hold of the canoe, waded out a short way into the lagoon till the sails filled with wind, and then jumped on board. The canoe shot away at once. The pressure of the wind against the sail soon became so strong that the outrigger was lifted up out of the water, but Tehei knew

what to do. He ordered us all over to the windward side and himself crawled far out on to the outrigger to press it down with his weight. This put things right, and the canoe ran on safely and steadily, while the hull and outrigger drew two broad lines, as parallel and level as a pair of railway lines, on the ruffled surface of the lagoon.

Raroia is long, narrow, and oval in shape, with its axis running from north-west to south-east, and like all the other Tuamotu islands it consists solely of a narrow belt of coral, from 200 to 550 yards wide, enclosing a vast lagoon. Here and there on this coral reef, sand and crushed corals had become piled up in such quantities that a little island had been formed. Altogether there are hundreds of small islands and islets on the Raroia reef, most of which are only a few hundred yards long and only three can boast the imposing length of two and a half miles.

No one knows the exact size of the lagoon, for it has never been surveyed, but most people estimate it at about twenty-two miles long and six miles wide. This must be about right, for from the village one can see neither the northern nor the southern end of the island, but the eastern side is quite clearly visible as a narrow green band along the horizon. The greatest depth of the lagoon is 160 feet, but in many places huge coral blocks rise right to the surface and are a considerable hindrance to navigation.

The morning sun shone right in our eyes as we danced along over the waves, so Tehei kept a sharp look-out from the farthest end of the outrigger and shouted orders to Maono, who sat at the tiller. We soon discovered that they had different names for the shoals according to their size and depth. A shoal which did not reach the surface and which the canoe, therefore, passed over with ease was called *marahi*. For the shoals which reached the surface there were no less than three different names. If they were not more than about fifteen feet in diameter they were called *puteu*, but if they were between fifteen and fifty feet they were called *karana*.

Thanks to the language being adapted in this manner to the islanders' special needs, Tehei could tell us upon what kind of shoal we were in danger of running much more quickly and more precisely than would have been possible in English or any other European language, and Maono was not slow in acting upon his instructions.

After an hour's cruising against the easterly wind we reached Tetou, as the largest island on the eastern side of the lagoon is called. Here there was once a flourishing village, but the great cyclone of 1878 destroyed it so completely that now only scattered coral blocks and shattered foundations of houses witness that between 300 and 400 persons once lived on the island. Only half a dozen of them survived the catastrophe,

and they, comprehensibly enough, preferred to settle in the village of Ngarumaoa, on the opposite side of the lagoon.

The island had been replanted some time just before the First World War, and now long straight rows of coconut palms sway in the breeze. Otherwise the vegetation was as scanty as on all the other islands on the Raroia reef. The only trees of any size besides the coconut palms were a few pandanus palms - graceful, pretty trees with long aerial roots which make them look as if they were growing upside down - and two species of deciduous trees. There were about twenty kinds of trees and bushes. That was all.

Raroian traditions tell of yet another dramatic event which once happened at Tetou. One dark and stormy night in the 1860's the inhabitants of the village of Tetou were suddenly awakened by a tremendous noise from the outside of the reef. On hurrying across they saw to their amazement a large vessel high up on the reef. Lights were still burning in the cabins, but not a living creature could be descried on board. Before they had recovered from their astonishment the ship quite unexpectedly slid back into the sea and then was immediately flung by the breakers back again on to the reef with such violence that she was at once transformed into a shapeless wreck, which slowly sank.

During the weeks that followed pieces of the ship and her fittings were thrown up on to the beach every day, and there they still lie. Many of the iron plates are of huge dimensions, and according to the traditions preserved, the vessel was at least as large as the foreign ships which call at Papeete - which means that she was of at least 4,000 to 5,000 tons.

Where the ship came from and what happened to the crew are two questions to which the Raroians have never had any answer, but somewhere in some old shipping register there must be a note of a vessel having been lost in some manner unknown between Valparaiso and Papeete, which would solve the problem.

A little farther north lay the little round island paradise on which the *Kon-Tiki* raft stranded. We waded across to the island and strolled round it along the beach. The promenade took just two minutes. A few rusty food tins, and a screw-lock which had belonged to I could not remember what, were the only reminders of our visit two years earlier.

"The *Kon-Tiki* preserves were the best I've eaten," said Tehei, poking his big toe cautiously into one of the rusty tins. "The whole village thought so too, for when you had gone, everyone stayed at home and ate preserves morning, noon, and night. No one did any work, no one fished, no one did anything but eat preserves. Some people mixed the contents of all the different kinds of tins, others ate only pineapple or meat. We finished them in a week."

This was certainly good testimony to the excellence of the preserves and to the Raroians' appetites, for we had left behind about 1,500 tins.

"But when there are no rafts," Tehei added, gazing sadly out over the empty sea, "we have to make do with Raroia's own supply. Wait a minute and you'll see what they look like."

He took two spears out of the sailing canoe, gave one to Maono, and waded with his companion out into one of the many channels a few feet deep which joined the sea to the lagoon. He raised his spear and struck. The next moment he drew himself up and flung a big fish up on to the beach. It was more like an eel-pout than anything and was about eighteen inches long. Immediately afterwards it was Maono's turn to harpoon a fish, and in less than ten minutes they had caught four fish of about the same size.

While Maono disappeared among the palms Tehei collected a heap of coconut fibre, set light to it, and laid the fish on the fire unsealed and uncleaned.

"As in old times," said Tehei. "There were no frying-pans in those days and no cooking fat either. The coconut fibre was the frying pan and the guts were the cooking fat."

Maono returned with some tender palm shoots and a couple of fresh coconuts. Obviously we had both salad and sweet. After a time Tehei considered that the fish were grilled and raked them out of the fire with the branch of a tree. They were charred and did not look particularly appetizing, but Tehei knew how they should be prepared. He threw them far out into the lagoon with a graceful gesture and himself waded after them. He took them out one by one, slit them, and cleaned away all the eggs, guts, and charred parts.

"In the old times there was no salt on Raroia and so they used to dip fish into the sea," he explained when he returned to the shore and laid the tidv in rows on the green leaves which Maono had spread out on the ground.

"Now when we are in the village we eat fish fried in a pan," he continued, "but when we go over to the small islands to make copra we often cook the fish as it used to be done. I think it's better like this."

After the first mouthful we agreed with Tehei. The fish cooked on the embers and salted in the sea was indeed a real delicacy. We finished the meal with a foot or two of palm shoots and a few coconuts each.

"Now we'll go and sleep," Maono announced. "When one has had a good meal one must sleep. It is good for the stomach."

Soon we were l snoring in the shade of the palms, full up and happy. When at last we woke it was already so late in the afternoon that we only just got back to the village before darkness fell.

"Tomorrow we can eat more Raroia dishes and sleep on another island if you like," said Tehei when we parted. "There are always fish in the lagoon, and there are so many islands that no one has been able to count them."

Time passed quickly and we adapted ourselves gradually to the new conditions and acquired continually more and more friends. One of the funniest was Rehua. I remember especially one occasion when he suddenly appeared and asked if it was really true that I had a machine with which one could write the letters of the alphabet. When I replied that I had one, he wondered if it was also possible to write Tahitian with it. I assured him that it could be done perfectly well, which seemed to please him very much. He took out a paper and asked politely if I would be so kind as to help him to write a letter on my machine. Of course I put in a sheet of paper at once, and he dictated the following curious document:

Ia ora na Jack with the blessing of Jesus Christ and Maria Immaculata. Amen.

It is I who have your boy, whom you gave to me in Tahiti. Do you remember? I look after him well and feed him every day. When he grows big I shall send him to school in Papeete, so that he shall learn French and all that a popaa *can. I will pay for this. Then when he grows still bigger perhaps you will send him to America. Then you will pay for this. If you agree with me, write to me. When he grows big he will inherit half of all that I have.*

Written by Rehua a Tuamea.

Rehua read the letter through twice with delight. Then he said: "Can you put it in an envelope and write the address too, so that it will look like a real letter?"

"Yes, certainly," and to his unaffected delight took out an envelope with a cellophane ‘window’ for the address.

"To whom is it to be sent?" I asked.

"To Jack in Tahiti."

"H’m, there are sure to be many Jacks in Tahiti, Has he no surname?"

"Oh yes, but it was so curious that I have forgotten it."

"H’m, but who is Jack?"

"He gave me the child. He is from *popaa* land. Write 'To Jack,' it’ll get to him all right."

I wrote 'To Jack, Tahiti.’

A great commotion in the morning. A crowd of children came running and shouting *"Inaa, inaa"* at the top of their voices. Some of them took us by the hands and pulled us along. They were so eager that they stumbled over the coconuts in the village street and their enthusiasm began to infect us. We soon saw that half the population had assembled down on the

quay. Most of them had pails in their hands.

"Will you have *inaa?*" asked Tarakeha.

"What's that?"

"Little, little fish. As good as sardines."

When we looked more closely we found that the water round the quay was swarming with little fish about half an inch long.

"The whole creek is full of them," Tarakeha explained. "They stay quite still and we have only to scoop them up. We don't need to look for fish here on Raroia. They come to us."

He plunged his pail into the water, let the water run off, and poured a few pounds of fish out on to the sand. Soon we were all engaged in "fishing". We followed Tarakeha's recipe, mixed the fish with flour and water and fried the whole mess over the oil stove. The dish when cooked looked like toffee but tasted like fried Baltic herring.

At twelve o'clock it was so hot that the air quivered in front of our eyes and the thermometer showed 95° in the shade. Just as we were on the point of collapse Maono came and asked if I would not play football with themi I tottered off to the 'football ground' and sat down under the shadiest palm I could find, doubtful whether I should even be able to keep my eyes open. But I soon became so interested in what I saw that I forgot the heat and my weariness.

The Raroians were playing quite a new kind of football, which should properly be called 'coconut football'. In addition to the living players a considerable number of coconut palms also took part in the match! The most skilful players, however, not only seemed able to avoid the palms but cunningly collaborated with them. The ground stretched as far as a man could run, and the goal-keepers often had to be ready for attacks both from in front and from behind. High kicks were particularly difficult, for when a player kicked the ball up into a palm-top it often happened that a coconut came down instead.

All who felt inclined took part in the game for as long as they liked, and all of course bare-footed. The referee sat on a wooden box and blew his whistle practically without stopping, but quite understandably none of the players took any notice of his whistling except when they considered that they had scored a goal. The match ended in a draw, 2-2.

"Maono's team ought to have won," I said when the match was over.

"Perhaps," replied the referee, "but here all the matches end in a draw. As soon as it's 2-2 or 3-3 I blow the whistle. It's best that way. No one is annoyed and all are friends."

"But what do you do if one team is much too strong for the other?" I objected.

"That is impossible, for if one team is getting the best of it, one player

goes over to the other side. If that doesn't work, another goes over. And the result is a draw. We like that best here on Raroia."

It cannot be denied that the Raroians' original view of competitive sports has much to be said for it.

On one of our first days on the island Tarakeha began to bring us fresh fish each morning and suddenly one morning Tapakia arrived with half a dozen of his innumerable children, each of them carrying one or two coconuts. He bored through the eye with a sharp piece of wood and handed each of us a nut.

"There is a story of how the coconut came to exist," he said, choosing a nut for himself. "Once long, long ago, there was nothing but bushes and grass here on Raroia. A woman called Hina often used to lament this, and her husband Tuna therefore began to consider how he could get some useful plant. One day he said to her: "When I die, cut off my head and plant it." Soon after he did die, and Hina planted his head as he had told her. Soon a green shoot appeared, which soon grew up into a big tree. The curious new tree was full of nuts, which were of the same shape as Tuna's head, Hina picked a nut and took off the fibre. When she discovered the three eyes she was pleased and said: 'Look, there are Tuna's eyes and mouth. I knew he spoke the truth'."

Tapakia emptied his nut and gazed at it reflectively.

"Some say it's only an old story, but one can never know," he added. "The eyes and mouth are there...."

Marie-Thérèse and I went for a long walk along the shore of the lagoon in the afternoon, and when darkness began to fall we were still a long way from the village. For a moment we were uncertain as to the way, but then a familiar sound reached our ears. The young people of Ngarumaoa had begun their evening entertainment, and the guitar music and singing told us in which direction the village lay. We went on slowly while the stars began to shine out in the dark blue tropical sky above us. Suddenly a familiar tune was borne to us on the cool night breeze. We stopped and listened. It was the same song our friends had sung for us the day we came to Raroia, and we crooned the words softly to ourselves as we stood motionless in the dark:

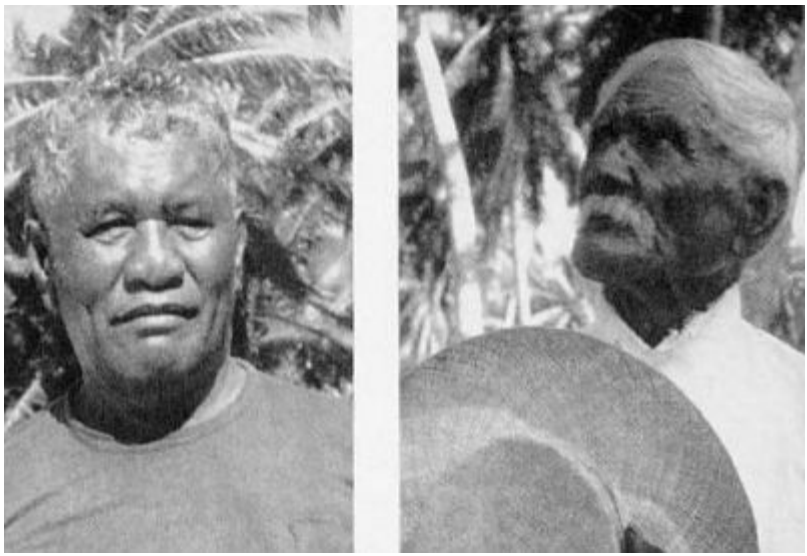
... this is Raroia,
The land of the cool winds.

The song of joy mingles
With the noise of the breakers.
Here is our country.

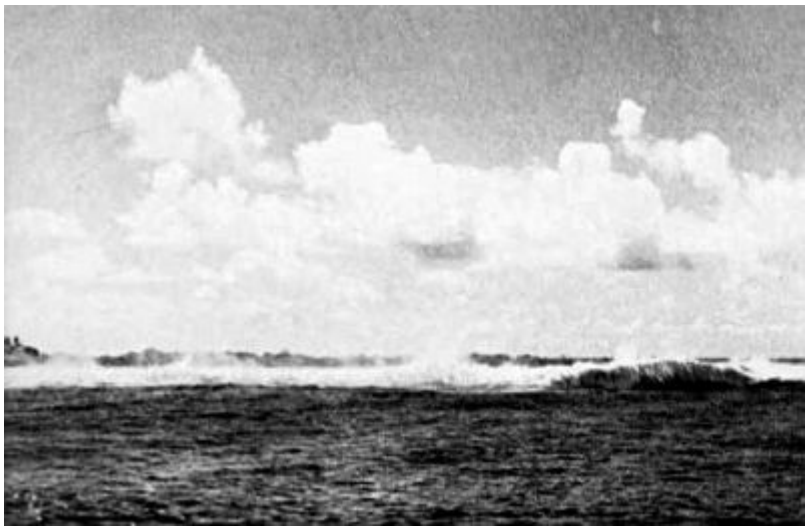
We felt already as if Raroia was our country too.

Marie-Thérèse and I aboard the *Teretai* in the Papeete harbor. Soon we would leave Tahiti, bound for the coral atoll, Raroia.

The letters from kindly Chief Teka brought me back to the island paradise we *Kon Tiki* men had discovered in 1947.



Vice-chief Tupuhoe (*left*) and Chief Teka were on the quay with all the others to say *ia ora na* [may you live] when we arrived. A few days later Varoa (*right*), the former chief and oldest islander, cam to greet us.



The long narrow belt of coral atoll, which is Raroia, encloses a vast lagoon. Although one cannot see either the northern or southern tips from the village of Ngarumaoa, the eastern side is clearly visible as a green band on the horizon.

A little Polynesian girl came with me this time when I visited the three-foot coconut palm protected by a fence. Teka grew this tiny tree from one of the Peruvian coconuts which crossed the Pacific aboard the *Kon-Tiki* raft.

Raroians faithfully observe Mass in a church built of coral cement in 1875.

The natives dress carefully each Sunday, and some even put on shoes, surely a sign of genuine penitence.

CHAPTER THREE

Aita Peapea

The Raroians' friendliness and generosity - Tehei's house and Tefau'a wheelbarrow - Delight in making journeys - Tuamotu group an exception — The island officials - Spiritual unity - Simple way of living—Fearlessness - First contact with trading schooners - Allurements of civilization - Copra production begins - 'Bird money' — Nearly $40,000 a year Monthly budget - Wooden houses, furniture, and bicycles Tutepo's motor - Rauri builds a wall - Beer and smuggled spirits - Tara's land purchase - The empty shop - Rehua's business - Blessings of the depression

I yawned, stretched, and turned over in bed. Marie-Thérèse was up, busily puttering about the kerosene stove. More than six months have now passed since the day when we were received with songs and music down on the quay on the shore of the lagoon, and strangely enough nothing has changed. All are still as generous and effusively friendly as on the first days, and however hard we think we cannot remember a single occasion on which we have been badly or coldly received. This is undeniably an admirable quality, but still more astonishing to a stranger from far off, accustomed to a more rational and serious manner of life, is the Raroians' unequalled carelessness and levity.

Although we have come to know them all pretty thoroughly, and thus ought to be accustomed to their peculiarities and special characteristics, it still often happens that we are astonished and puzzled by their incalculable behaviour. Nothing can depress or perturb them, and like children they have the enviable capacity to live just for the moment, oblivious of the day before and untroubled by the morrow.

The slogan of this optimistic philosophy of life is a cheerful *aita peapea*: No matter! Why worry? Who cares! The first time we heard the expression was, characteristically enough, the very day of our arrival. In the crush down on the narrow stone quay one of the singers suddenly fell into the water and thoroughly splashed the whole reception committee, who were dressed up to the nines in their best Sunday clothes. At once a whisper of *aita peapea* ran through the crowd, and all laughed till they could laugh no more. This was, of course, no more ^an was to be expected in such a situation, but the generous use which the Raroians have made of their favourite expression was overwhelming.

For example, one day Tehei showed us his house, which although obviously newly built had a remarkably tumble-down appearance. On closer inspection we found that this was simply because hardly one angle was straight and all the measurements ludicrously out of proportion. Tehei's explanation was very simple.

"All the different measurements are such a bother, and I'm so bad at counting. The only man who can build decent houses is Ruto, but he was staying with relations on Hikuera when I wanted to build, so I had to do the job myself. Of course the house is a bit crooked, but it's none the worse for that. *Aita peapea!*"

Another equally astounding example. In the first week we were sometimes surprised to find wheelbarrows and bicycles abandoned in the village street or thrown down in the most unexpected places. We thought the reason probably was that the good Raroians were too lazy to put them under cover, and we soon had confirmation that our suspicions were extremely well founded.

One day it suddenly occurred to our neighbour Tefau to fill up a number of holes on his piece of land, and he got out his wheelbarrow. We saw him make several trips down to the shore, where the waves had washed up the finest white garden sand imaginable, but then he suddenly disappeared. When we looked into things more closely we found, as we had expected, that he had abandoned the wheelbarrow, full of sand, in the village street. Days passed, but the wheelbarrow remained in the same place, and although Tefau passed it at least twice a day, and although it was obstructing traffic, neither he nor anyone else showed a sign of moving it. About a week later Tefau quite unexpectedly took hold of it one morning and continued his work as if nothing had happened!

This is not an exceptional case: Raroians as a rule are just as capricious in everything they undertake. They abandon their work all of a sudden because they have seen a curious fish or some other object of interest. *Aita peapea*. Why hurry? There's always tomorrow.

Another characteristic habit of the Raroians is that of going on casual journeys unexpectedly and without any preparation. Young and old delight in seeing the world, and every call of a schooner is a strong allurement for them. As soon as anyone has to go to Papeete for one reason or another the urge to travel spreads at once, and at least half a dozen of the Raroians suddenly find that they have important business to do there, or that their relations are desperately anxious to see them. They have relations everywhere in the Tuamotu group also whom they never forget, and if the schooner should not be calling at the particular island they meant to visit, that does not matter, for there is always an aunt or a distant cousin on the next one. *Aita peapea.*

Like the Tuamotu natives in general, Raroians have preserved this typically Polynesian carelessness a good deal better than most of their kinsmen in other parts of French Oceania, and the reason is certainly that the Tuamotu group is still astonishingly untouched and isolated. While most of the other native peoples have suffered severely from the processes of civilization, conditions on Raroia and the other Tuamotu islands arc in many important respects still the same as in the good old heathen days, before any copra schooners had ventured in among the treacherous coral reefs.

Of course this does not mean that the natives are still blood-thirsty cannibals who run about among the palms half naked and live in the palm-leaf houses of Hollywood romance - as perhaps may have been gathered from all that has been said about galvanized iron, wooden houses, shoes, newly pressed clothes, preserves, and football matches - but simply and solely that the milieu and conditions of life are in the main unchanged. Despite the outward similarities, and despite the many manufactured wares and other civilized things with which the islanders surround themselves, Raroia is therefore essentially different from Tahiti and most of the other more famous South Sea islands.

First and foremost, the Raroians are still astonishingly free and independent. In pre-European times there was a native dynasty on the island, and the chiefs or hereditary kings ruled more or less arbitrarily. When the French set up a protectorate over the Tuamotu islands in the middle of the nineteenth century they put an end to this system and installed a chief nominated by the authorities at Papeete. But in other respects they left the natives to themselves.

The chief is now elected by the Raroians themselves - a step forward which naturally has been greeted with unmixed pleasure - but otherwise the changes are small. The officials are few, and their rule is mild to say the least. The chief's most important tasks are to supervise the sales of copra, to keep a record of births and deaths, to marry couples, and to direct all common work, but these duties can hardly be said to weigh very heavily either on him or on the population. Certainly Teka has several times complained of the amount of work he has each time a schooner arrives, as he has to sign all business documents, but as there is at the most one schooner a month and he never reads the papers through, it is hard to take him seriously.

From the inhabitants, characteristically enough, no complaints have been heard, but if anyone should be dissatisfied with anything, he has ample opportunities both of saying so and of getting any abuse rectified. Now and then the chief calls a meeting of the village council; this consists officially of five elected members, but anyone who likes can take part in it

and express his views.

Alongside the chief there is only one other civil official, the so-called *mutoi*, who is nominated by the authorities at Papeete. In theory the *mutoi* is postman, policeman, and assistant to the chief, but in reality he has no duties of any kind. The Raroians never write or receive letters, crime is unknown, and the chief naturally never requires any help. The office, however, is keenly sought after, as the holder has the right to wear a uniform with red stripes and braid.

These are all the civil officials on the island. To them must be added the church officials, who consist of two catechists. Their tasks are to conduct the services and otherwise deputize as best they can for the priest, who only comes on a visit once a year. The duty the catechists prize most is undoubtedly ringing the church bell, and only in an emergency will they hand it over to anyone else. Even when the greater part of the population goes off to the islands in the lagoon to make copra, the catechist who is on duty that week remains in the village and rings the bell for a handful of old women and children - or simply for himself.

So long as this simple and democratic system works - and it has worked now for several generations — the central authorities at Papeete do not interfere in any way. Once a year the administrator of the Tuamotu islands comes to listen to complaints. His visit usually takes a few hours, or at the most one day. On rare occasions a higher official pays a lightning visit. That is all.

It should perhaps be added that the Raroians, like all the other natives in French Oceania, are French citizens and have exactly the same rights as all other Frenchmen in the mother country or in the colonies. At the same time their obligations are considerably more restricted - for example, the Raroians are not liable to conscription, do no war service, and pay no taxes except the dog tax. Even this is illusory. Ratters are exempt from this regulation, and consequently all the dogs on Raroia, irrespective of race or size, are ratters.

The Raroians have not only been able to keep their right of self-determination to a very great extent, but they also managed to keep their land, which is at least as important. The isolation and insignificance of the island are largely to be thanked for this fortunate circumstance, but the understanding attitude of the authorities has also played a considerable part.

At the beginning, isolation was the most important protection against intrusive foreigners. The hordes of ruthless adventurers, arms smugglers, dealers in spirits, and robbers from every corner of the globe who invaded the South Seas in the nineteenth century preferred, naturally enough, to seek their fortune on rich, fertile mountainous islands like Tahiti, Samoa,

and Hawaii, and regarded with contempt the miserable little atolls of the Tuamotu group. At the most, the boldest of them paid a short visit to the best known of the pearl islands in the hope of being able to make a dishonest fortune quickly, but no one ever dreamed of settling in the Tuamotu group. While other Polynesian peoples succumbed to diseases, war, and drink, and to a great extent lost their freedom and their land, the Tuamotu islands were left almost completely in peace.

When, later, France brought the islands under her sway, her main policy was still, as far as possible, to prevent the natives from being exploited and from losing their lands. So successful has the colonial policy been that there are only half-a-dozen white plantaion owners in the whole group, and the inhabitants without exception have their own land. Certainly some have more and some have less, but no one on Raroia, for example, is so poor that he has not a site of his own to build a house on and piece of land with enough coconuts to supply his wants.

The exceptional quality of the Tuamotu natives is still more striking on the spiritual plane. Having been left to themselves to so great an extent, far off the shipping routes and the beaten tracks of civilization, they have succeeded in preserving their original unity. While we so-called moderns in the west are split up among ourselves into a thousand different groups, parties, professions, and nations, the Raroians are still united and harmonious. For them there is only one way of doing this and only one way of looking at existence, no religious doubts have yet appeared, and they never come into contact with other peoples and races. All are equally good fishermen, copra workers, and craftsmen - that is to say, there are no classes - and a uniform system of social conventions and prohibitions determines what they shall or shall not do. In other words, they are whole and believing where we are sceptical and relativist. They have succeeded in preserving the homogeneity which is so characteristic of most so-called primitive peoples.

It is significant enough that nervous diseases are quite unknown among the Raroians and when, for example, I described in detail one of the commonest neuroses of civilization, schizophrenia, to some of the oldest and most intelligent of them, they listened mistrustfully and then declared with one voice that they had never seen or heard of any such queer disease on their island.

The weather has also helped preserve the basically Polynesian life: it is summer all the year round on Raroia. The balmy climate simplifies existence and considerably limits requirements. Everyone solves his housing problem with enviable simplicity and speed by putting together a house of palm-leaves, galvanized iron, fir wood, or lids of cases, according to taste and means. There is plenty of water for washing in the

lagoon, and drinking water falls from the clouds free of charge or can be plucked from the trees in the form of coconuts.

Fuel consists almost invariably of coconut fibre, which Nature strews about generously everywhere. In a quarter of an hour one can collect fuel for a week. The climate also contributes indirectly to the solution of the food problem. The lagoon teems with hundreds of fish of different kinds, and a short fishing trip of a morning is bound to give splendid results. Clothing is necessarily reduced to a minimum. One pair of shorts yearly, with a loin-cloth by way of change, are quite enough. Generally speaking, of course, the Raroians do not live in quite such a simple style, but what is most important is that they *can* do it at a pinch.

To these four important factors - independence, security of tenure, spiritual wholeness, and simplicity of life - which now as in the past are the basis of the Raroians' safe and untroubled existence and certainly the main cause of their merry, carefree character, at least one new gain can be added. The last seventy-five years of French rule have not only preserved what was best in the old social order but have definitely put an end to the wars and hostilities between the islands, in pre-European times often cruel and bloody.

Since then their isolation from the world around has effectively kept the Tuamotu natives out of the recent world wars and is, of course, still their best protection. They are, therefore, in a torn and suffering world, one of the few peoples who have really attained what so many humans long for - freedom from hardship and fear. Can one then be surprised that they are so carefree and always laughing and singing?

Another result of the last seventy-five or hundred years of contact with western civilization is that the Raroians have begun to dive for mother-of-pearl and to make copra, which brings them in regular and surprisingly large incomes.

A European observer, accustomed to the great part played by money in a community would therefore perhaps be tempted to attach great significance to these big incomes, or actually consider them the most important reason for the Raroians' carefree, happy outlook on life. In reality, curiously enough, money does not seem to play the same decisive role among them as among us Westerns. The whole money system is a loan from the outside world which the Raroians do not yet fully understand, and they are happy rather in spite of their money than because of it. If we go a very short way back in time, we shall find, too, that money has been almost forced upon the Raroians.

In pre-European times mother-of-pearl was valuable only as a material for fish-hooks and tools, and no one troubled to grow more coconut palms than he needed for his own private economy. In the middle of the

nineteenth century, however, schooners from Tahiti began to appear among the Tuamotu islands, and to the amazement of the natives the queer strangers who were on board gave cloth, knives, and other articles of value in exchange for pearls and mussels, of which there were quantities in the lagoons and which anyone could fish up without any great trouble.

Soon they found that the schooners were glad to take coconut oil also in exchange, but in spite of the relatively good payment in the form of goods this trade never developed to any great extent, as the Tuamotu natives found it far too much trouble and too hard work to make oil in the quantities the schooners wanted. The only method of production then known was to chop the nuts in half, take out the flesh of the coconut, smash it, and then stand the whole mass in large wooden dishes in the sun, which in a few days turned it into a thick oil. The buyers were just as dissatisfied with this method as the natives, for it was both uneconomic and unpractical (only about half the oil content of the kernels was obtained).

In another few decades before the method of drying the nuts in the sun spread to French Oceania, The advantage of this new method was that the nuts could be sent entire to margarine and soap factories, where they were utilized 100 per cent. The natives on their side also appreciated this change, as it meant considerably less work for them; all they had to do was to chop the nuts in half, let them dry in the sun and take out the kernels. Many, of course, still rejected with contempt the idea of doing anything so stupid as to work and sweat in the sun for a few scraps of cloth or knives, but the number of natives who now and then condescended to cut up a few nuts increased steadily.

The advance in the copra trade led also to an advance in the trade in mother-of-pearl mussels, and many natives became professional divers. Diving for mussels was not so dull as making copra, and there was always the possibility of finding a large shining pearl, which could be exchanged for undreamed-of quantities of drink and cloth on board a trading schooner!

Soon some skipper found it simpler to introduce money, and as everywhere in French Oceania when the Panama Canal had not yet been opened and Valparaiso was still the most important transit port, the first coins were the Chilean dollars. These were large bright coins with an eagle on the face, and therefore the natives called them 'bird money*. Many of the Raroians and their kinsmen were so fascinated by these shining coins that they collected them in heaps, and in our day there are still plenty of them in hidden chests and boxes.

Others found that they were both practical and convenient as a medium of exchange for things they wanted, and the most enterprising

accompanied the schooners to Tahiti and returned with envied riches in the shape of jars of preserves, meat-mincers, furniture, ball dresses, Bibles, iron bars, and a thousand other astonishing things of which in most cases they naturally did not know the use. As a memento of those times, by the way, the Raorians and Tuamotu natives reckon all prices in *tara,* i.e. the Polynesian form of the word dollar, although the only coins used nowadays are French francs. A *tara* means five francs because in the good old times the rate of exchange was five francs for one Chilean dollar, and force of habit is so great that a Raroian will say that copra costs two *tara*, rather than that it costs ten francs.

This first contact with Papeete and the wonders of civilization naturally created a number of new and artificial needs. To satisfy them, more and more of the natives began to make copra or dive for mother-of-pearl mussels. Production increased and trade flourished, to the great pleasure of the buyers and skippers. All the schooners went both to and from Papeete with full cargoes, and the Tuamotu islands were flooded with worthless rubbish which was sold at shameless prices.

By and large, the situation is still the same. The worthy Raroians' annual earnings are astonishingly high, but the money is quickly wasted on senseless or useless things. Exactly how much each man earns it is rather difficult to find out, for of course no one troubles to keep accounts, but the figures which the copra buyers have given are fairly eloquent. (There has been no diving for mother-of-pearl mussels for a long time past.) According to these Raroia's annual output of copra is about 250 tons. The price in the last two years has been about 10 Tahiti francs per kilo, which means that the Raroians together earn not less than 2,500,000 million Tahiti francs, or about $40,800 a year. The population consists of rather more than a hundred persons divided into twenty-five households. The average yearly income of each household is therefore about $1,600.

This money is paid cash down on delivery on board the copra schooners. Income tax is as unknown as capital tax. No one puts any money into the bank for the simple reason that there is no bank. Except for a few old people who laid the foundation of their saving habits when money was solid silver coinage, which it was a joy to collect and count, nobody hoards. On the contrary, it is unusual to find anyone who has any money left if he has to meet any unexpected demand. Where does the money go?

About one-third goes to the two merchants on Raroia, the Anglo-Tahitian Temake or the Chinese Tauere. Everyone buys on credit from one or both and pays as much as suits him every time he sells some copra. Only in very rare cases do the people know whether they are in debt to the shop-keeper or have a credit with him. What they buy and how much only

the tradesmen know, and it was one of them who gave me the following expenditure for a month, which can be regarded as typical of most Raroia families. The household consists of husband, wife, mother-in-law, and two boys of ten and twelve.

In the following table the prices are given in the metric system - that used in France and her colonies - but the conversions to America standards immediately follow in parentheses. The actual cost is quoted in Tahiti francs and centimes, followed by the dollar equivalent. Tahiti franc have an exchange rate of .016 per franc in United States dollars.

		Tfr.	c.	Dollars U.S.
Jan. 1:	1 kilo biscuits (*2.2 lbs*)	46	20	$ .74
	1 can beef	22		.35
	½ kilo candy (*1.1 lbs*)	105		$1.68
	2 packs American cigarettes	40		.64
	10 kilos flour (*22 lbs*)	153		$2.45
Jan. 2:	1 carton American cigarettes	375		$6.00
Jan. 3:	10 kilos sugar (*22 lbs*)	130	20	$2.08
	2 cans beef	45		$ .72
	1 liter kerosene (*1.056 quarts*)	19		$ .16
Jan. 5	2 kilos coffee (*4.4 pounds*)	160		$2.56
Jan.6	1 can beef	26		$ .42
	1 can pears	45	50	$ .73
	2 mirrors	244		$3.90
Jan. 8:	1 kilo rice (*2.2 lbs*)	29	50	$ .47
	1 kilo kerosene (*1.056 quarts*)	10		$ .16
	3 packs French cigarettes	45		$ .72
Jan. 9:	1 bottle	90		$1.44

	perfume			
Jan. 11:	1 pack American cigarettes	20		$ .32
	1 box macaroni	26	60	$ .43
	½ kilo candy (*1.1 lbs*)	105		$1.68
Jan. 13:	1 kilo rice (*2.2 lbs*)	29	50	$ .47
	11 kilos flour (*24.2 pounds*)	168	30	$2.69
	1 pack American cigarettes	20		$ .32
Jan. 14:	2 kilos coffee (*4.4 lbs*)	160		$2.56
	2 packs American cigarettes	40		$ .64
	2 cans beef	45		$ .72
Jan. 16:	1 kilo biscuits (*2.2 lbs*)	48		$ .77
	10 yards cloth	518		$8.29
	1 pack American cigarettes	20		$ .32
Jan. 18:	4 packs French cigarettes	60		$ .96
Jan. 19:	2 kilos rice (*2.2. lbs*)	60		$ .96
	1 liter kerosene (*1.056 quarts*)	10		$ .16
	5 bottles lemonade	60		$ .96
Jan. 20:	1 can tomato sauce	9	60	$ .15
Jan.21:	1 pack American cigarettes	20		$ .32
Jan. 23:	2 cans beef	45		$ .72

	2 packs American cigarettes	40		$ .64
	2 kilos coffee (*4.4 lbs*)	160		$2.56
Jan.25:	1 kilo onions (*2.2 lbs*)	25	50	$ .41
	2 packs American cigarettes	40		$ .64
Jan. 26:	1 kilo biscuits (*2.2 lbs*)	46	20	$ .74
	3 packs French cigarettes	45		$ .72
Jan. 20:	2 cans beef	45	___	$ .72
	Total	3,448	10	$55.09

This is the total expenditure on so-called necessaries, and yet a British housewife would certainly have a somewhat different opinion regarding the necessity of at least half of them! Another thing which cannot fail to cause surprise is the highness of the prices, which is due more than anything to the roundabout selling procedure. Most goods have an abnormally long way to travel before they reach the customer.

The first middleman is one of the general agents at Papeete. After having paid customs duty (often 30 to 50 per cent of the value) and added his commission he sells the goods to one of the schooner-owners, who sends them off to Raroia. On the way the price rises by 30 per cent, which is the percentage of profit allowed by law. On the arrival of the goods one of the merchants receives them, and after he has added a further 10 per cent they at last appear in the shop, ready to be taken away by the customer. The price is now double the original price!

Of course the Raroians could save large sums by ordering the goods direct from the importer at Papeete instead of buying them from the tradesmen, and they have considered the matter, but hitherto they have always come to the conclusion that it would be too much trouble. They have a decided repugnance to letter writing and are weak in all the form simple rules of arithmetic. If there is one thing the Raroians are not it is stupid, and they understand very well that the goods they buy are much too dear, but what does that matter? Have they not always plenty of money? *Aita peapea*. They like to have a shop full of brightly coloured tins of preserves and gaudy trash, where they can get what they want

whenever they like.

The Raroians spend the rest of the income on quite senseless and useless things - useless from our rational point of view. In the first place we have objects of 'snob value'. Most of the Raroia people have been in Tahiti and have seen how their more advanced relations live, and they do their best to imitate their 'urban' relatives. For example, for several decades past every self-respecting Raroia family has had to have a house in the European syle. Wooden houses of genuine deal planks are naturally considered the smartest. Next come houses of galvanized iron and wooden huts built of old boxes. Lowest in the scale of values come the palm-leaf houses in the old Polynesian style.

One thing, however, struck me one day as I was walking round the village with Teka. Practically all the wooden or galvanized houses were flanked by small houses of plaited palm-leaves. I asked him what they were used for, and his reply was undeniably illuminating.

"You understand, it's hot in the middle of the day in a wooden or galvanized iron house. It's good to have a palm house to be in then."

Clearly the classical best-room system on a rather larger scale.

But the lunacy does not end there. The fine European house must also be furnished, and the standard furniture, for some inexplicable reason, consists of a few chairs, an iron bedstead, and a chest of drawers with a glass mirror. This sounds comparatively reasonable, but the reality is quite different. With the possible exception of the mirror, none of these fashionable objects serve any practical purpose, but are obtained simply for the sake of prestige. Like their forefathers from time immemorial, all Raroians always prefer to sit and lie on the floor, and the few belongings they want to lock up they keep in large wooden boxes. We soon found out that the Raroians never made use of their chairs, and although we often offered chairs, as an experiment, when they came to visit us, they invariably sat down on the floor *between* them.

We were at first a little more doubtful about the large iron beds with embroidered counterpanes and pillows which were to be found in every house, but we discovered that these too were only decorations. The Raroians sleep on pandanus mats on the floor beside their well-made beds. The most important thing is to *have* a bed, not to use it.

It is the same with the bicycles. There are at least twenty-five bicycles on Raroia, and all of them are new and shining. As soon as a bicycle loses its shine or gets broken it is condemned and the owner buys a new one - for the simple reason that no one knows how to enamel or repair it. A good deal more remarkable than this trivial fact is that there are no roads on Raroia. The only way of making use of these smart bicycles is, therefore, to ride up and down the village street, which is just over 300

yards long. This may perhaps seem a trifle monotonous, but it is more than enough for the Raroians. For that matter, they would find it wearisome to cycle for any longer distance, and in any case the most important thing is to show what a fine bicycle one has. Sunday is the chief parade day, and in the hours after mass the village street is usually full of cyclists, pedalling to and fro in a leisurely and dignified manner, punctiliously ringing their bells.

But the most amazing example of this prestige competition and unreasoning worship of the marvels of civilization is Tutepo's motor. On a visit to Papeete he was so fascinated by a boat motor that he would not rest till he had collected enough money to buy one. (His determination in saving methodically for nearly a year is still admired as a performance unexcelled on Raroia.)

The motor he had originally seen was a 5 hp outboard motor, which would certainly have been well suited to his canoe, but of course he was not content with that, and bought the largest he could get for his money - a 15 hp inboard motor. Of course there was no boat on Raroia for which it was suited, but that did not trouble Tutepo particularly. The motor was his, and he was the only person on the island who had a motor. After various misadventures he at last succeeded in starting it, and since that happy moment hardly a week has passed without his taking it out and running it to his friends' undisguised envy and admiration.

Buying furniture, bicycles, machines, and other similar things serves at least to confer a certain prestige. Many, however, throw away at least as much money on some chance caprice or fixed idea. The Raroians are impulsive and incalculable, and as they live for the moment only it often happens that they start upon undertakings which cannot possibly be carried out, which as a rule they do not discover until it is too late. A typical example is house-building. Everywhere in the village one sees cement foundations of giant size. Many of them are mossy and weather-worn, and we therefore thought to begin with that they were the remains of houses which had been pulled down or destroyed by hurricanes, and we were choked up at the thought of all the Raroians who had perished

. But we deceived ourselves greatly. With one or two exceptions these houses are uncompleted masterpieces and shattered dreams. They have all been built by some villager, who in his delight at some specially good deal has hastened at once to lay the foundations of a new house; and this, on account of its huge dimensions, lack of material, inability to save systematically, general weariness of the whole business, and a number of similar causes, he has naturally never been able to complete. We have counted more than ten of these monuments to the Raroians' optimism and impulsiveness, and only in one case have we been able to discover that the

building has served any reasonable purpose. Tatehau uses his imposing foundations, three feet high, as a pigsty!

Cement, however, is not merely useful for laying the foundations of houses, but can, as is known, be employed for countless other purposes, which the Raroians unfortunately have discovered. Most of them, in fact, suffer from an unlucky love of cement. One day, for example, I found Rauri digging a ditch across his piece of land. This was undeniably a curious occupation for a Polynesian, and I questioned him closely as to what he meant to do.

"It's not be be a ditch," Rauri explained, "but a wall."

"A wall? But you've no neighbours."

"No, that's right, but this is to be a way to keep the weeds out."

"To keep the weeds out?"

"Yes, there are so many weeds outside, and they're always getting into the garden," Rauri replied emphatically and went on digging till his back creaked.

I felt a little anxious for Rauti's sanity and asked his son-in-law what he thought of his plans.

"Pooh!" he replied. "It's just that he's got hold of a few bags of cement. He's built so many houses and foundations that he had to think of something else. He's like so many others here. Heads first and thinks afterwards. When the wall is finished he'll laugh at the whole thing. *Aita peapea*!"

The wall never was finished, but Rauri laughed at it none the less for that.

Another important item of expenditure is liquor and merry-making. Out of consideration for the natives, the authorities long ago forbade all selling of spirits in the Tuamotu islands, but as spirits are quite free in Tahiti it is naturally impossible to secure respect for the prohibition. The Tuamotuans not only learn to drink during their visits to Papeete, but get all their smuggled spirits from that place. Certainly the customs men search the schooners when they sail from Papeete, and the fines are as high as 1,000 Tahiti francs (about $16) for every litre that is confiscated, but there are many hiding-places on board a schooner and as, moreover, she can always take the spirits on board after leaving Tahiti, the traffic flourishes pretty well unhindered. That the Raroians have to pay dearly for this smuggling is a matter of course, and the price of a litre of rum - the most popular drink - usually varies between 600 and 1,000 Tahiti francs, or from $9 to $16. (The price at Papeete is $2.80) Characteristically enough, the Raroians are less indignant over the price than over the rum sometimes being mixed with water or tea.

Some reformers, anxious for the natives' pockets and health, put

forward last year a proposal that beer should be admitted into the Tuamotu islands free. The authorities decided to make an experiment, and it would certainly have turned out well if they had introduced a rationing system at the same time. This they omitted to do, and the result was that the islands were flooded with beer. The people of Raroia could hardly believe their eyes when they saw cases of beer in great piles on board the schooners, and when they heard that each case contained forty-eight bottles and yet cost so absurdly little as 1,200 Tahiti francs (about $19), they immediately bought ten cases each.

For several months they ignored flour, biscuits, cloth, and cement and put all their money into beer in the not unwarranted fear that such a happy state of things could not last long. The festivities at last assumed such dimensions that the authorities cancelled the permission to import beer free. As a memento of those times there are still thousands of beer bottles in the village, which have been put to an original use. The Raroians use them as borders to their flowerbeds, and at the same time they seem to play a certain part in the social prestige system. If the bottles have contained only cheap beer the labels are turned round to face inwards, but if they have contained first-class expensive beer the labels are left facing outwards.

If by any chance some money remains after all the thoughtless purchases and merry-making, the Raroians do not hesitate a moment as to how they shall use it. Papeete is only a few days' journey from Raroia, and in Papeete there are always unbounded possibilities of obtaining still more attractive things and continuing the junketing. The shops are full of trash from all quarters of the globe, the bars are open from morning till night, the taxicabs are always ready to drive those who have money, and there is a fresh programme at the two cinemas almost every evening. They stay in Papeete as long as they have a franc left, and almost always the end of it is that they travel home on credit.

The Raroians' charming way of doing business with one another shows, even more clearly than all this careless spending, how happily and fundamentally ignorant they are of our European money system and ideas of competition. A striking example is Tara, a man of thirty-five who returned lately after more than ten years in Tahiti. As he had been foolish enough to dispose of all his land when he left Raroia, he wanted to buy a new piece of land with enough coconut palms to supply his needs.

The only person who was willing to sell was Tekura, and Tara gladly paid him 50,000 fr. ($800) for a piece of land which he had never seen and the exact size of which Tekura did not know. Of course no contract was drawn up. After a time Tara found that his newly acquired piece of land was unfortunately too small, and that the income from copra was sufficient

only for drink and feasting but not for food and other necessary expenditure. He complained to Tekura, who was much distressed, as he had absolutely no idea of cheating Tara.

As Tekura had no more land to spare, and naturally had drunk up all the purchase money, he did not quite know at first what he should do to help his unlucky buyer, but after thorough reflection he hit on an excellent solution. Tekura had so many friends who ate at his house that he would need a cook. Would Tara not be his cook? This would solve his food problem, and he would be able to use his copra money for other and more important things. Tara was willing, and since that day neither party has had anything to complain of.

Not even those who claim to be business men have succeeded in becoming particularly thick-skinned. Luckily. On one of the first occasions when we went over to Temake to do business he said: "Haven't you anything better to eat than canned food? Take this fish instead. It's fresh, for I've just caught it."

We thought this was a gesture of welcome, but that can hardly have been the case, for it has happened countless times even though each time he lost a sale.

Compared with Tukaoko and Rehau, however, Temake is a regular calculating business man. Tukaoko's story is the saddest. Last year he had the idea of opening a shop. The stores kept by Temake and the Chinese certainly provided amply for the Raroians' needs, and there did not seem to be any great prospect of another one paying its way, but such petty considerations counted for nothing with Tukaoko. He built with much trouble and expense a shining new galvanized iron house, which he painted blue and yellow outside and green inside. He placed along the walls shelves of the finest wood from Tahiti, and on the door a board with his name in large black letters. All this cost a lot of money, and when Tukaoko at last reached the point of laying in a stock of goods, he found to his great distress that he had not a franc left.

Tukaoko easily consoled himself, however, with the thought that as soon as he had made a few tons of copra he would get going in earnest. He scraped together by degrees a fairly imposing sum and went to Tahiti. Evidently he quite forgot the object of his journey, for positively the only thing he brought back to Raroia was the memory of a splendid time with many parties, motor drives, and visits to bars. This happened two years ago. His shop is still as shining and colourful as ever, and although Tukaoko still talks at great length of the wonderful stocks he is going to lay in next time he goes to Tahiti, it looks as if his friends were right when they said compassionately: "Tukaoko was a fool to spend so much money on his shop. He'd have done better to drink it."

Rehua's story is a little different and according to Raroian ideas not nearly so sad. Rehua also suddenly wanted to open a shop. But, rendered wise by Tukaoko's misadventure, he did not build a new shop but simply moved his old grandmother to a relation's household and established himself in her wooden house, which had a good position for a shop. As he had just come back from one of the small islands with a good load of copra he was able to make large purchases from one of the schooners, and soon canned goods, gym shoes, soap, and biscuits were arranged neatly and in good order on shelves newly cut from packing box lids. Despite this good start, however, things went no better for Rehua than for Tukaoko. One of his neighbours told us why:

"To keep a shop one must be able to count and write well, but Rehua both counts and writes badly. He bought a whole lot of goods at once, and so he could not remember how much he had paid for the different things. And when he set himself to work out how much each thing cost, he worked it out wrong. And straight away he sold beef for eighteen francs a tin, although he had paid twenty francs for it himself on board the schooner. But he had forgotten that. It was the same with many other things. His relations always got everything free. Rehua has many relations. Each month he took less and less money. At last he had not many goods left and no money to buy fresh things with. Then he did not want to be a merchant any longer, but gave a great party for us all. In two days we ate up everything in the shop."

All things considered, where Rehua, Tukaoko, Temake, Tutepo and all their relations are lucky is not that they have so much money to throw away recklessly, but that if necessary they can do without it altogether and even do without it joyfully. For example, the great depression at the beginning of the 1930's had repercussions even in the South Seas and for several years the Raroians had no income. In other parts of the world unemployment was a great and tragic problem. But it afflicted none of the Raroians. When they no longer had any flour, coffee, biscuits, or beef they returned to their ancestors' simple way of life and ate fish, sea birds, eggs, roots, and coconuts. Instead of suffering, they were all the healthier for it.

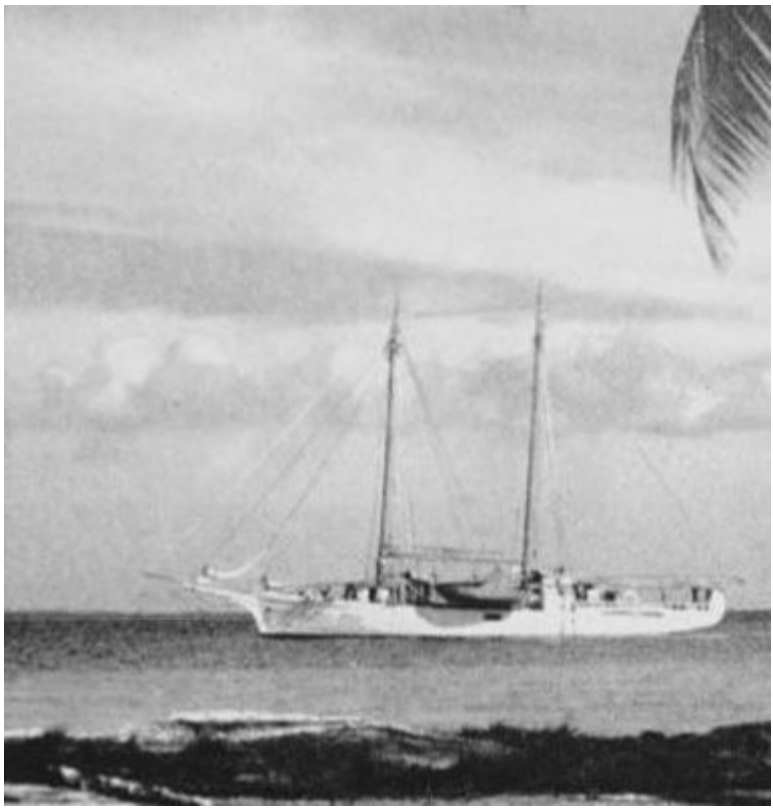
They could not indeed buy any furniture, bicycles, machines, or other fine manufactures, but on the other hand they were free of all the tedious work of copra making and had more time for singing and dancing. The way in which the Raroians met this world crisis is in fact the surest indication that money has very little effect on the happiness of this enviable island. It is good to have money, but if it suddenly disappears it does not matter much. *Aita peapea*.

Poe is made by dropping red-hot stones into a mixture of fruits, starch, and water.

The islanders have found a use for their empty beer bottles - they use them for a decorative border around their flower beds.

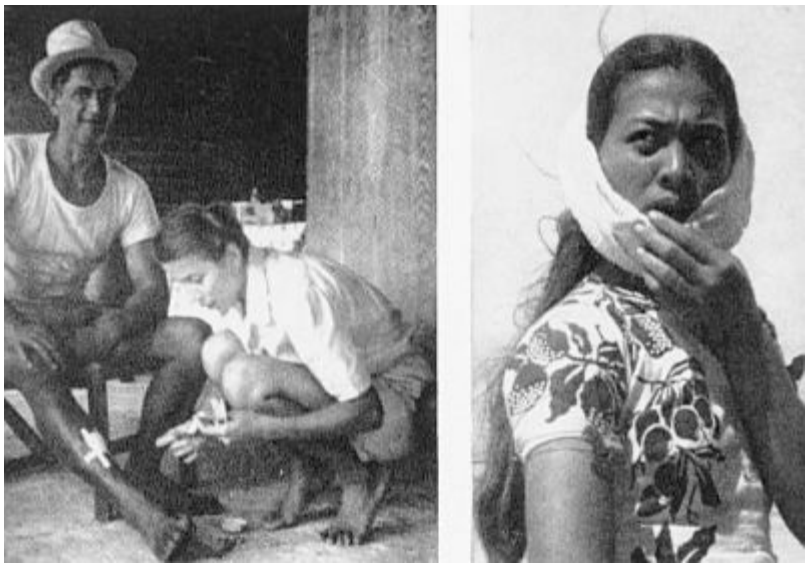
Here there are no troubles or worries! The tiny tots splash about in the cove near the village where the temperature of the water averages about eighty degrees.....

....and the young folks and adults ride their fine, shiny bicycles up and down the village street which is about three hundred yards long. Bicycles on Raroia are only play things, for there are no other streets or usable roads on the atoll. And the natives, not knowing how to repair the bicycles, discard them often for new shinier ones.



About once a month a schooner comes to get copra in exchange for *popaa* goods.

The schooner is the Raroians' only connection with the outer world, and they hurry to exchange their copra for canned goods, tobacco, and smuggled liquor.



Almost everyday Marie-Thérèse dressed leg boils and cuts from coral (*left*). Another chronic complaint is toothache (*right*), for all have decayed teeth from childhood.

The finest piece of furniture in every house is an iron bed or divan. But in spite of their well made beds, Raroians sleep on the floor on pandanus mats, as their ancestors have done since the beginning of time.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Doctor Can't Come

Mysterious explosion - We establish ourselves as healers Dr. Carson's sample medicines - Temake's medicine chest - aid for the drowning — Wanted: a miracle - Polynesian food A modern menu - A queer intoxicant - Teua's diet - South Sea chills - Cups and enemas — Iodine the universal remedy Strange boils - Taipuhia's feet and Temake's back - The soldier's return - A tragic accident - Cheerful children — Sailing among the palms - The journey to Papeete

WE had not been on Raroia for more than a few weeks when one day, to our great surprise, we heard a loud report which sounded more like an explosion than anything. Probably someone fishing with dynamite, we thought, and we went out to look at the spectacle. But we had not got far before we discovered that, whatever it was, it was not fishing with dynamite.

There was not a living soul on the beach, but all the villagers seem ed to have assembled at Tutepo's house a little way off. We realized at once that something unusual must have happened, for their behaviour was really most peculiar. The women were waving large palm-leaves, the men were all talking at once, the children were running to and fro shrieking; even the dogs seemed to have been infected with the general excitement, for they were leaping and howling like mad creatures. When we came nearer we saw Tutepo lying stretched on the ground, apparently lifeless.

"What has happened?" we asked Tehetu, who seemed to be the only one who had retained any degree of self-possession.

"Tutepo was filling his engine with petrol, and all of a sudden it went bang!"

"Was it going?"

"Yes, it was going very well, but then all of a sudden, when he began to pour in petrol, it went bang, and he began to burn."

Tutepo had severe burns on both legs, his chest and one arm, A couple of the men were rubbing the burns with their dirty fingers, while his wife and daughters were fanning him with palm leaves. We stopped this maltreatment, and while I was rolling him up in what clothes and copra sacks I could get hold of, Marie-Thérèse ran to fetch our handbook on first aid in case of accident, which, we felt, ought to contain something about

the treatment of burns.

We searched in the chapter on burns and frostbite and read: 'Take off clothes. If they have stuck to the wound, clip round them and leave the material. Cover the wounds with vaseline or oil. *Call a doctor immediately.*'

I could not help smiling a little when I read the last piece of advice. The nearest doctor lived at Papeete, seven hundred miles away, and there was no sailing boat on Raroia which could make such a long voyage.

"The best thing is to try several different medicines and treatments," said Tehetu, "for then one often finds out at last which is the right one."

Her advice was a good deal wiser than it sounded, but as it happened we did not think we needed to experiment on Tutepo. We greased him with vaseline from top to toe, and, to the horror of the spectators, wrapped him up in the best bedspread. Next day he was in great pain and had such enormous blisters that he resembled a balloon more than anything. We saw that he drank extra quanities of nonalcoholic liquids and kept him well vaselined for days. A few weeks later we pronounced him cured. But the happy result was probably due as much to his own constitution as to our vaseline.

After this successful cure patients began to flock to us as if we had been bone-setters or famous healers. Our medical knowledge was naturally rather hazy, but at all events we could read what was in our medical books and farther had some ideas of anatomy and hygiene, which was hardly the case with the Raroians. To be able to deal with the rush we fixed visiting hours and installed our medicine chest on the veranda, sending as we did so, a grateful thought to Dr Carson in San Francisco.

It was due, in fact, to Dr Carson and good luck that our medicine chest was so well filled. Some days before our departure from San Francisco an employee in the shipping office suddenly discovered that we lacked certain certificates of vaccination, without which we should not be able to land at Papeete. We had indeed, during the past year, been inoculated at least twice in each case against typhus, paratyphus, diphtheria, smallpox, and other diseases the names of which I cannot remember for the moment, but we had no certificates to show this and, we were assured, the certificates were the most important matter, not the actual vaccination.

We therefore trudged off to a skyscraper twenty-six floors high, all of whose twenty-six floors were occupied by doctors and dentists. The doctors had odd and the dentists even numbers. A staff of girl telephonists, directed by a nurse, was in continual contact with all the reception rooms and distributed the patients so that they got to the right specialist and the time of waiting was made as short as possible. The nurse listened to us in a friendly manner and announced rapidly and with machine-like precision:

"Vaccination against tropical diseases, room 1435, floor 17, Dr Carson is waiting,"

Half a minute later we were there and Dr Carson was receiving us at the door. He greeted us as cordially as if we had been friends from childhood, produced a file and said:

"Let me see, French Oceania. You will be vaccinated against smallpox and diphtheria."

While he was preparing his syringes he changed the subject of our conversation easily and gracefully, and we were soon in the middle of a detailed account of the weather on the west coast, the uninhabitableness of the eastern States, the construction of the Golden Gate bridge and the growth of San Francisco since the earthquake in 1906. There followed a thorough discussion of Marshall aid and the post-war economic problems in Europe while, smilingly and almost casually, he pushed the syringes into us with speed and vigour. A little later he had reached his experiences in the war in the Pacific, and when at last, with genuine regret, we were compelled to part from our newly acquired friend, he had also been able to describe the best methods of protecting ourselves against dysentery and amoebas in the tropics. Just as we were going out he stopped us, opened a large wall cupboard and took out an armful of sample medicines.

"Look here," he said, "I know what it's like in the South Seas. You can never get enough medicine."

Dr Carson was perfectly right, and his sample medicines - like those an equally friendly Seattle dentist gave us - immediately supplied a long-felt need on the island. The only remedies known to the Raroians when we arrived were headache powders and iodine, of which there were only some few boxes or bottles. Certainly Temake had a small store of medicines, but we soon discovered that it was of doubtful value. We inspected it one day at Temake's request, and as the pill-boxes and bottles were stowed away all over the house in boxes and under beds, the whole family joined in the search for them.

"Look, here's my cough mixture," Tehetu cried, holding up a dusty bottle. "I'll take a dose now."

"No, stop," Temake protested at once, "that's not your cough mixture, it's my lotion. Will you rub my back?"

Tehetu shook the dust off the label and said triumphantly: "You see I was right. It's *penikire*."

"Yes, of course," said Temake and handed the bottle back to Tehetu, who took a good dose.

"Let me see," I said, taking hold of the bottle. Right across the label was clearly printed: '*Painkiller*. For external use only.'

Terava found some pills which she thought were for stomach-ache, or

perhaps for fever. She offered to try them on one of the invalids. It was the same with all Temake's medicines. No one really knew what they should be used for, and the labels were either missing or were incomprehensible. We confiscated the whole store. Dr Carson's sample medicines were more reliable.

We soon found that all the Raroians' own methods of treatment were as barbaric as those they had employed when Tutepo burned himself. If anyone had fever and was hot, he ought, according to their idea, to cool himself in the lagoon. If anyone had a stomach-ache he should tie a rope around the waist to prevent the pains from spreading to other parts of the body, and if anyone had attacks of vomiting the thing was to stuff into him as much food as possible - and as quickly as possible - to replace the lost nourishment. Surprisingly enough, they did not even seem to know how a drowning man should be treated. To the best of their recollection, it had only once happened that anyone had been in danger of drowning. This was, characteristically, a Tahitian, ignorant of the local conditions, who had tumbled into the sea outside the reef.

"What did you do then?" I asked.

"We laid him on his stomach across a barrel and rolled it backwards and forwards."

"Did that do any good?"

"No, but then we tied him on tight and rolled the barrel right round once. That did good."

Much has been said and written of the natives' remedies and even many Europeans are seriously convinced of their healing value (although they naturally prefer to go to hospital if they are *seriously* ill). This native healing art, in pre-European times, naturally flourished most in Tahiti, where the flora is far richer and more varied than on the barren Tuamotu islands, but even on an island like Raroia many different recipes were known for the preparation of the few herbs that existed.

I will not deny that many of the herbal medicines which were made in old times had therapeutical value and were relatively effective. But, in our days, still to prefer these native remedies to the products of modern science is of course as out of date and stupid as making fire by rubbing sticks together instead of using matches. As a rule it can be said that in every case - there are not many - in which one can point to an effective native remedy, there are at least half a dozen better ones at the drugstore.

Another thing which must not be forgotten in this connection is that the great majority of the diseases which ravage French Oceania in our days are *new* diseases imported by us whites. For these the Tahitians and the other Polynesians had of course no medicines at all - and still have none. In spite of this the natives almost always prefer, even in these cases,

to make a mixture of a few herbs rather than buy *popaa* medicines, and this has yet more catastrophic results.

A typical example is seen in the repeated attempts which our friends on Raroia have made to cure an ordinary periodical headache. Almost everyone has a different recipe - and these are, of course, without exception old, authentic, and reliable - but the method is always the same. They boil their herbs in a large saucepan, strain them and wrap them up in a cloth which they bind tightly round their heads. During our long stay we have seen innumerable poor wretches, all of whom regularly submit themselves to this treatment with a sincere belief in its efficacy. The reason why there has so far been no improvement is, they assure us, that it is a long and difficult cure. The real reason, of course, is that they are suffering from hereditary syphilis.

But it is even more absurd when they begin to mix other substances than herbs. Eggs, for example, enjoy great popularity for their healing powers, and the great majority of the inhabitants of French Oceania firmly and fully believe that all diseases from measles to lunacy can be cured by drinking a raw egg. If, however, one has sharp pains in the chest (inflammation of the lungs) the yolk of an egg should, of course, be smeared on the body externally.

The most tragi-comic example of blind confidence in the wonderful effect of those queer remedies was in connection with a case of serious infection, which an anxious relation wanted to cure with ‘real *raau* Tahiti' instead of penicillin, as we proposed. Curious to see what concoction he had brewed, we told tire self-appointed wonder-worker to fetch his ‘*raau* Tahiti,' and, beaming with delight, he showed us some soup in a bowl.

"How did you make that medicine?" I asked.

He looked round, as if afraid to betray his miraculous recipe, but at last managed to utter the words;

"If you want to know, it’s lemon, condensed milk, and *rakau kurakura* in equal amounts."

It should perhaps be added that the lemon tree was introduced by Cook, that condensed milk obviously did not exist before the arrival of the Europeans, and that *rakau kurakura* is an ornamental plant which an American botanist imported into French Oceania about twenty years ago. This, then, was what the Raroians called ‘*raau* Tahiti,' a genuine Tahitian medicine which would stop an infection.

The remedies described certainly have the merit of being completely harmless, which unfortunately cannot be said of all the mysterious decoctions and treatments which certain native 'doctors’ prescribe. Unhappily enough there are still here and there in French Oceania charlatans who practise for or without payment, and most of these

criminal individuals (who unfortunately are always shielded by their patients) have a good many lives on their consciences.

One of the most distressing cases I have heard of is that of a ‘magician’ who on one occasion tried to cure a baby ‘which was possessed by the devil’ with a decoction of spirits, ashes, crushed snails, and various other ingredients. The natural result was that the devil survived, but the child died.

On Raroia we were fortunately free from professional healers, and the general level of medical knowledge can in spite of everything be described as above the average, thanks mainly to the wise and devoted work of one or two missionaries.

Another difficulty which both the missionaries and we have to contend with is that even if the patients can be convinced of the superiority of our methods, they draw back as soon as these are painful. They would like to be cured, but not if the cure gives them pain or trouble. Then they prefer to keep the illness. One of our first patients was a little girl of five who had thorns about three-quarters of an inch long in her neck. The wounds were open and purulent.

"She jumped into a hedge with long thorns in it," her father explained.

"Did it happen a long time ago?" I asked.

"Perhaps two months, perhaps three, I don’t know exactly....."

"But haven’t you tried to take them out?"

"Yes, but she screams every time, so I daren't."

We let her scream and took out the thorns.

After this incident we decided to make a tour of the village to see if there were not some invalids who were keeping out of sight. The result was overwhelming. Almost all the villagers had either stomach trouble, toothache, or open infected wounds; many bad chills and half a dozen had asthma. We also found a woman who had sprained her foot and one case of paralysis.

On a walk to the outskirts of the village, we stopped at old Varoa's house. Sitting in the garden, weeding, was a strange woman - at least we had never seen her before. She introduced herself as Mahia and continued to weed. Marie-Thérèse and I immediately sensed something amiss, for she showed no sign of wanting to invite us into the house. Everywhere else people used to exhibit with pride their houses, their children, their gardens, and all their other 'sights’. Mahia energetically declared that unfortunately she had so much weeding to do that she had no time to receive us. This finally convinced us that there was something wrong. A Polynesian woman who had not time for a chat because of her work must be abnormal in some way.

We hurried across to Tehei's house and asked the meaning of the

woman's mysterious behaviour. Tehei hesitated a little, but at last revealed Mahia's secret to us:

"Mahia has trouble in her legs. She can't walk. Once when she was a little girl she climbed up into a coconut palm. As she was not used to climbing palms she tumbled down. When she tried to get up she found that her legs were paralysed. She couldn't walk home, and she was so far from home that no one heard her calling. Next day her papa found her. Since then she has crawled about like a child. Not in the daytime of course. Then she sits in the garden and weeds. But at night she crawls over to some other house to talk, or to the assembly house to watch the others dancing."

"But has she never been sent to the hospital at Papeete?"

"Yes, but not till several years after the accident, and then it was too late,"

"But why did she wait so long?"

"Because she was afraid the doctors would cut her legs off. She didn't want that. But perhaps someone could work a miracle."

We proposed that someone in the village should make her a pair of crutches, and with the help of a drawing Tehei made a pair which would have perfectly fulfilled their purpose. But so far no one has seen Mahia use them.

We were hardly more successful in our attempt to cure Kuraingo, who had sprained her foot. When we found her she was sitting on the extreme edge of the veranda dangling her badly swollen foot.

"How long have you had a bad foot?" I asked.

Kuraingo counted on her fingers. "Ten days."

We put the foot in splints as well as we could, established Kuraingo in a corner with her leg in the air, and told her to keep still till further notice. Next day, when we came back to look at her, to our surprise we found her in the kitchen with no splints or bandage on.

"Why have you taken off the splints?" I asked.

"I couldn't walk with them on."

"But you were to lie still."

"Yes, but it's so boring to lie still."

Marie-Thérèse and I withdrew, helpless in the face of Raroian philosophy. This was not the last time that the natives' carelessness and levity aggravated an illness or made it impossible to cure one.

Most distressing of all are not these isolated accidents, but the 'national illnesses' - stomach trouble, toothache, and chills. All the old people have assured me that stomach disorders and toothache were unknown in their youth, when the inhabitants still lived in the primitive Polynesian manner. In those days their nourishment consisted exclusively of fish, which was

often eaten raw, sea birds (which were baked in earth ovens, as cooking-pots and frying-pans were unknown), turtles, raw mussels, coconuts, pandanus fruits, taro, and pokea - *Portulaca johnii*, a kind of purslane. The only beverages were rain-water and coconut milk. Day after day, month after month, year after year people always ate the same food and thrived on it.

In the last seventy-five years conditions have changed radically. Taro and pokea are no longer grown, raw fish is very little eaten and raw mussels hardly at all. The copra schooners have introduced a quantity of new foodstuffs and canned goods, and the Raroians' menu is sadly barbaric. Naturally they still eat a great deal of fish, but it could be said with as much justification that tinned beef and dumplings are now the national dishes. The chief cause of the popularity of these dishes is certainly that they are easy to prepare - the meat only needs to be heated up a little and the dumplings consist of a piece of dough which has been cooked for a short time. The consumption of coffee and sugar is also alarmingly high. A 'normal family' of five persons, for example, consumes 4 lb. of coffee a week, and as it is always roasted immediately before use it is, moreover, excessively strong.

The Raroians' weekly menu, therefore, with extremely small modifications, is as follows:

	MONDAY
Morning meal (8 A.M.)	Coffee and bisuits. Coconuts.
Midday meal (3 P.M.)	Corned beef, dumplings, and rice. Sauce made of coconut milk and sea water.
	TUESDAY
Morning meal	Corned beef and dumplings. Coffee.
Midday meal	Fish, canned sardines, and coconuts. Coffee.
	WEDNESDAY
Morning meal	Fish, bread, and coconuts. Coffee.
Midday meal.	Corned beef and rice.
	THURSDAY
Morning meal	Fish, dumplings, and coconuts. Coffee.
Midday meal	Fish. Sauce made of coconut milk and sea water. Coffee.

	FRIDAY
Morning meal	Coffee and biscuits. Coconuts.
Midday meal	Corned beef and dumplings. Coffee.
	SATURDAY
Morning meal	Fish with coconut sauce.
Midday meal	Fish, bread, and rice. Coffee.
	SUNDAY
Morning meal	Fish, dumplings, and bread. Coffee.
Midday meal	Fish, corned beef, dumplings, and canned peaches. Coffee.

No wonder they have stomach trouble; such important foodstuffs as milk, cheese, butter, and green vegetables are entirely lacking!

To this should be added that men, women, and young people of both sexes - all without exception - are chain smokers and that many have acquired an unquenchable thirst in the Papeete bars. When they have no smuggled spirits they use well-known surrogates, and one of the most popular drinks is actually hair oil. Most people seem to be so hardened that they can drink the grease without any unpleasant consequences. This, unfortunately, is not the case with all the other peculiar surrogates which the Raroians cheerfully test. One day a little girl came and asked if I would do something for Heiao, who was ill.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked in slight surprise on finding him on the steps of his house, where he was sitting, well and in good spirits, chatting with his friends.

"I get drunk whenever I drink water!"

"What kind of water do you drink?"

"Ordinaiy rain-water. Other people who drink it don't get drunk."

"That's queer. Have you drunk anything else besides water?"

Heiao turned and twisted a little and cast down his eyes.

"No - yes - that is, I did drink a little methylated spirit yesterday. I dare say it was stupid, but it was so hard not to. I was getting out a bottle of hair oil, and I suddenly caught sight of a bottle of methylated spirit. I never put methylated spirit next to hair oil; it was my wife had done it. As the methylated spirit was there, it occurred to me that it might be better and stronger than hair oil, so I poured out a glass, mixed it with a little water, and drank it. It was good. But today I get drunk as soon as I drink ordinary water."

The situation was tragi-comic and I could not help saying: "But that's

a cheap way of getting drunk. I think I'll try a little methylated spirit myself...."

"No, don't do that," Heiao said in alarm. "Don't do that. I shall never drink anything but hair oil myself after this."

To Heiao's disgust I prescribed hot milk.

The result of all this starchy food and the abuse of hair oil can, of course, only be the ruin of stomachs and teeth. The Raroians, I am sure, see where the trouble lies, but find it hard to give up their habits. A grotesque example of this was furnished by Teua, a middle-aged woman who one day came to 'consult' us.

"I've got a pain in my chest," she declared.

"Point to where the pain is," I said, knowing from dearly bought experience how vague is the Raroians' knowledge of anatomy.

She pointed to her stomach.

"But that's your stomach, not your chest," I said.

"Perhaps, but that's where the pain is."

"Have you been drinking rum lately?"

"She was drunk all yesterday," her twelve-year-old daughter, who stood by, informed us.

"Have you pain often?"

"Always, but more when I drink rum."

"Stop drinking rum. What do you eat?"

"Beef and dumplings."

"That's why you have a pain in your stomach. Drink hot milk in the mornings, eat fish, macaroni, and tinned green vegetables in the middle of the day, and a few coconuts for supper."

"Can't I eat chocolate and tinned peaches? I don't like milk, and I shall only get worse if I eat macaroni."

"Have you ever tried macaroni?"

"No, but other people have, and they have been ill."

"Perhaps that was because they were ill before. Take this list and eat nothing but what I have written on it."

Teua took the list and looked at it gloomily. Clearly it was not what she had expected.

"Ugh, a diet," she said, "I've a diet list already which they gave me at the hospital in Papeete. Haven't you any medicine which can cure me right away, so that I can eat what I like?"

Teua is not alone in believing in a miraculous medicine which can cure all illnesses in a moment. The Raroians have seen how, for example, the missionaries have cured infections and fevers with sulphates, and have drawn the somewhat hasty conclusion that there are such remedies for all diseases. That it is necessary to take care of oneself in other ways they

cannot and will not understand.

This, of course, is particularly irritating where illnesses caused by chills are concerned. It may seem strange that the natives of a South Sea island should be subject to such illnesses, but they are in fact just as common on Raroia as during a wet, cold autumn month in England. As in so many other cases, the main causes are carelessness and neglect.

The day temperature is usually between 86° and 95° in the shade and the night temperature between 68° and 77°. This difference is very noticeable; for example, we have found it necessary to use woollen blankets at night. The Raroians, on the contrary, use only one thin cotton covering and most often sleep on the floor in their draughty houses. Further, during violent rain and squalls the temperature falls swiftly and the wind becomes unpleasantly cold. Raincoats are unknown and, what is worse, the Raroians often go about in the wind in wet clothes for a whole day without troubling to change. Hardly a day passes without our hearing somebody with a hacking cough, and on several occasions the whole village has been chilled and feverish.

Another illness which may also be due to neglect is asthma; this is surprisingly common. We have done our best to convince sufferers of the advantages of staying in bed and putting on warm clothes, but of course these are instructions which no one will obey. As soon as our backs are turned the patients have disappeared. To stay in bed for as much as a day, or even a few hours, is more than any Raroian will stand.

The missionary who introduced the use of cups as a remedy for colds was more successful. Cups, as is known, are small glass vessels which are fixed tight to the skin by dropping in a scrap of burning cotton, whereby a vacuum is created. Most of the natives took great delight in seeing the wisps of cotton burning and the skin swelling up, and the cups soon achieved great popularity!

The thoughtful missionary who taught the Raroians to use cups against chills at the same time introduced enemas and started an offensive against gastric disorders. But this was too much at one time for the good islanders. Most of them mixed up the two treatments or drew the rather hasty conclusion that one was as good as the other, and we find a side person using a cup against stomach-ache just as often as a poor wretch with a chill trying to cure himself with an enema.

Although this interchange did not make anyone better, on the other hand it makes no one worse, and the missionary had much better luck with his enemas and cups than the therapeutist who, casually visiting the island just before the war, tried to teach the natives the use of such simple remedies as iodine and cotton. He explained in dear language that iodine was meant for the cleansing of wounds and even described in detail the

manner in which the wisp of cotton should be dipped into the solution of iodine and rubbed against the wound. They all declared that the whole thing was childishly simple and wondered why no one bad taught them to use iodine earlier.

To start with, all went well. Wounds were cleansed as never before, and iodine flowed in rivers. Then someone got eczema and had the idea that iodine might be good for eczema too. Unfortunately it proved to be excellent for this purpose also, and soon they began to use iodine for warts, sunburn, muscular pains, sprains, and various other troubles. Obviously, the Raroians said to themselves, this was the panacea. Why had no one said that it was good for so many different pains?

Then one day the chief (this happened long before Teka's time) got a fearful stomach-ache. It was evidently some new and peculiar illness, for neither enemas, cups, or aspirin were of any effect. At last he became so weak and ill that he was obliged to go to bed. As he was chief he had charge of the village's big bottle of iodine, and one night when the pains were attacking him worse than ever, he thought of the new panacea. It had been good for cleansing wounds and curing all external pains, so why should it not do for washing the stomach? He emptied the bottle at a single draught. A few days later he was dead.

"His stomach was burnt up and he had terrible pain," added Tehei, who told us the story.

Since this calamity all the islanders have had a decided repugnance to the use of the remedy. Many have even become so frightened of iodine that if one tries to give them any they secretly throw it away. This is particularly distressing since almost everyone on Raroia always has open wounds, which often become infected as the result of neglect.

Most frequently of all, the men cut themselves on the corals when fishing on the reef, where the breakers are violent and it is hard to get a footing. These coral wounds are the most difficult to heal, and it is often weeks before we get the better of them. But that they take so long to cure is often due more than anything to the fact that the Raroians cannot refrain from scratching the wounds with their dirty fingers when they begin to itch or hurt. Some who have heard vaguely that it is not a good thing to touch open wounds with dirty fingers use another and more elaborate technique. They scratch themselves with a comb!

One malady, which the Polynesians usually call - hota - we have never been able to conquer. This unpleasant illness begins as an insignificant boil, no bigger than a pea. After a day or two the boil swells up and forms a regular miniature crater as large as a half-dollar. If it opens at this stage one can think oneself lucky, for then one gets off with only a week or two of severe pain. Often, however, the boil continues to expand, and then

sometimes several weeks can pass before it finally opens and the slow process of healing can begin. Often the pain is so great that it is difficult to move. Marie-Thérèse and I myself had boils of this kind several times, and there were periods in which the Raroians were severely afflicted. The cause of these boils is presumably a lack of vitamins, for the natives of Tahiti suffer from them a good deal less.

The lack of medicine and medical care can be ascribed to the same basic conditions which make Raroia so happy and idyllic - the isolation and primitiveness. In other words, the diseases are the reverse side of the coin, the price which the Raroians have to pay for their free and careless existence. But they do not take their illnesses and other affections particularly tragically; they rather regard them as a necessary evil, which they, accept with dignified calm. There is so much to make them happy that the occasional sufferings that now and again come their way are mere quickly forgotten trifles. They do not seem able to take even chronic ailments really seriously, as Taipuhia's case shows.

I remarked that he often rubbed his feet with something, and at last asked him what was the matter.

"I've always had an itching in my feet," he said. "Ever since I was a small boy. When I can't stand it any longer, I rub them hard with a stone."

"You'd better take care not to wear out your feet," I advised him, tyring not to smile.

"My feet are all right," said Taipuhia. "But I've worn out several stones!"

The bystanders grinned as broadly as Taipuhia.

We gave him vitamin tablets, but they had very little effect. This may have been because he never took them.

Temake's pains in the back were a good deal more comic and also tragic. He stopped me one day as I was passing the canvas chair in which, more or less compulsorily, he spent his time.

"Penetito [Bengt], I've got a pain in my back."

"H'm. Perhaps you've been carrying too much copra. Have you had the pain long?"

"Since 1920. My back's hurt me ever since' then."

"That's a long time. Have you never been to a doctor when you've been in Papeete?"

"Oh yes, often,"

"Well, what do they say?"

"That it doesn't hurt me."

"H'm. Don't you rub yourself with lotion or something of the kind?"

"No, but my wife irons me every evening."

"Irons you? What do you mean by that?"

"I put on a wet shirt, and then she irons it with a hot iron right on my back."

"Does that do any good?"

"No, and sometimes she burns me."

"But if that's so you'd better stop the treatment."

"Perhaps, but someone in Papeete said it was good for rheumatism."

We tried lotion and coconut oil, but his case was clearly hopeless. The most tragi-comic part of the whole story is that he had come through the whole of the First World War and was injured only after his return to Raroia, when a coconut fell on him from a great height. Temake was one of the volunteers from French Oceania who took part in the war, and he had the good luck to return with a completely whole skin.

According to his own account he had first been somewhere on the Western Front the names were too queer for him to remember them - and afterwards 'between Greece and Turkey'. He returned at the very end of the war, covered with medals for bravery but without having learnt a word of French or having been particularly impressed by so-called Western civilization, which is quite understandable. On the same day on which he returned to Raroia he went and lay down to sleep under a coconut palm, and a large nut weighing over ten pounds fell on his back.

"I was so unaccustomed to its being dangerous to lie down and sleep on the ground," Temake explained. "During the war we could always sleep on the ground without being afraid of coconuts."

We soon became so used to the light, unconcerned way in which the Raroians took their diseases and ailments generally that we were quite astonished one day to hear loud weeping and a tremendous noise at the farther end of the village. What we had feared had happened - a serious accident.

As always, it was the children who first readied our house, but they were so agitated that they could not utter a single sensible word. But immediately after them Tehetu came running and shouting breathlessly;

"There has been a dreadful accident."

We soon found that it really was dreadful in several respects. Marau, a little girl of four, had begged her uncle to let her sit on the back of his bicycle when he was having a ride down the 'main street', and as there was no carrier on the bicycle she naturally slipped down at once and caught her foot in the hub. Before her uncle could stop the big toe had been crushed, and the foot of course became more mutilated when in his agitation he pried it loose instead of lifting of the chain.

When he came along carrying her in his arms, the blood was pouring from the shapeless mass of flesh full of broken-off pieces of bone that had once been a big toe. We cleansed and cut with the courage of desperation,

while the little girl naturally uttered piercing screams. Of course the toe could not be saved, but we succeeded in stopping the flow of blood and cleansing the wound fairly well, and that was always something.

After bandaging the tiny foot, we carried the sobbing child to her home. We thought that this distressing event would at least make her parents and relations for a time less frivolous than usual, but we deceived ourselves mightily, and even this tragic accident ended in sheer comedy. The parents had been so desperate and agonized when we were attending to the child that we ourselves had tears in our eyes and were obliged to send them away, but when we called to see our patient a few hours later, they were sitting there chatting with almost the whole population round them.

"Really her losing her big toe doesn't matter so much," said her father philosophically. "One can walk quite well without a big toe, and girls never play football."

We were not so optimistic. A large piece of bone was sticking out of the wound, and as we understood the matter, this must be cut away before the wound could heal. The only place where the child could be properly treated was Papeete. We explained this to the parents, who declared with suspicious eagerness that they would go anywhere for the child's sake. Rakenui and his wife Titi agreed to go as soon as a schooner came.

On one point Rakenui had slight misgivings. He had, of course, already dissipated all the money he had received for his copra on board the last schooner a week or two before. But it was not long before he found what in his opinion was an excellent solution of the problem. He had lately covered his house with shining galvanized iron. If he went to Papeete now, he reasoned, he would naturally not need the house during the time he was away, and as he did not need the house he might as well sell the galvanized iron to one of the merchants. When he came back he could always make copra and buy new iron.

"But you've got your brother and his family in the house too," we objected, when he described his plan to us. "What do you think he'll say if you pull off the galvanized iron?"

"Oh, he can come to Papeete too."

Rakenui asked his brother, and it appeared that neither he nor his family had anything against such a solution of the problem. Soon the whole family was busy taking the house to pieces and carrying the bits over to the merchant. Pulling away the galvanized iron was all right, for it made such a funny noise when it hit the ground; but to carry it the three hundred yards to the shop was a task which went a good deal slower.

Then Rakenui's brother found that if he held a sheet of the metal in front of him it acted as a sail. This discovery stimulated them all, and soon

they were having 'sailing races' among the palms, amid laughter and shouting. The wind, however, was unsteady, and all of a sudden Rakenui's ten-year-old boy tumbled down with a crash and cut his foot on one of the iron sheets. We were not absolutely unprepared for such an accident and dashed out like lightning to bandage him.

"He'll be good company for Marau," cried Rakenui. "She's beginning to be tired of being alone."

Soon the boy, too, was lying beside his sister with his leg high in the air. All the people laughed till they nearly choked.

Apart from the fact that the house became so draughty that nearly all the family caught colds, all went well till the long awaited day when the schoonor at last came. When we went down to the shore to say good-bye to Marau and Rakenui, to our astonishment, we found the ship's boat full of Raroians. Besides Rakenui himself, there were his brother and family of five children, brother-in-law, and a distant cousin and his wife. All these were evidently going to accompany Marau to Papeete.

But as this was a trip undertaken for medical reasons, we decided to take the opportunity to try to send another invalid who had long caused us anxiety. This was a youth of twenty, named Tiapara, who had a curious swelling over one eye. At times the swelling disappeared, but every time it returned it was larger and the headaches more severe. According to Tiapara himself he had contracted the illness from a hat.

We had searched vainly in our medical books to find some more rational explanation of the mysterious swelling, and had consumed half our medical chest in experiments without any visible results. It was, therefore, obviously a case for the hospital in Papeete. Tiapara was more than willing to go, and that he might not feel utterly lonely and abandoned in the big town, two sisters and an aunt immediately determined to accompany him. When at last the schooner sailed amid hymn-singing and guitar-playing, there was a decided majority of Raroians among the passengers.

Six weeks later Tiapara and his relatives came back. But none of the other Raroians could be discovered on board the schooner. Of course, the whole village was down on the quay to receive the travellers, and these had hardly got ashore before a hail of questions began to descend upon them. What was it like at Papeete? Had they met uncle this or cousin that? What had they seen at the cinema? Had they seen the mail aeroplane? Were there any big ships in the harbour? How often had Rakenui been drunk? Had they brought back any rum? Curiosity was unbounded.

Tiapara replied eloquently to all questions and related his adventures in the big town with sweeping gestures, but after a time he at last checked himself for a moment, and I had an opportunity of asking how he was.

"I’m all right," said Tiapara with a smile.

"What did the doctor say your trouble was?"

"I don’t know, for I haven’t been to the doctor."

"You haven’t!" Marie-Thérèse and I exclaimed in unison.

"No, when I got to Papeete the swelling had disappeared, so I didn't think there was any sense in throwing away money on expensive doctoring. But it's begun to hurt a bit again.,.."

"H’m. And how’s Marau?"

"All right. They cut off a bone at the hospital and sewed up the wound. It had almost healed when we left."

"Excellent. But why haven’t Rakenui and his relations come back with her?"

"Why, you understand, there’s so much to see in Papeete, and they haven’t seen it all yet. Rakenui came down to the schooner when we left and said they meant to stay at least till the Fourteenth of July to see all the celebrations."

That was in February then!

CHAPTER FIVE

Sons of Cannibals

A rich Polynesian literalure - The last scholars - Bishop Museum's expeditions - Varoa, ninety years old - We find Te Iho - Old traditions neglected - Story of the creation - Tiki and Maui - A voice from the past - Havaiki - The first chiefs Apportionment of tasks - Cannibal feasts - Children the best - A schooner's crew murdered — The first missionaries Conversion - From a thousand inhabitants to a hundred Devastation wrought by the great cyclone - Hunt for family trees - An important find

DURING their time of greatness, before any European ship had yet found the way to their islands, the Polynesians possessed a uniquely rich and comprehensive oral literature. It was based on the collective secular and religious experiences of countless generations, and large parts of it would in our days be classified as theology, philosophy,history, geography, or astronomy, while the remainder consists either of prayers, poems, love songs, or heroic verse.

A special class of scholars and priests watched closely to see that not a word was changed, and acted as living books of reference and teachers. In this way the Polynesians successfully performed the feat of preserving and passing on the whole of their vast oral literature, which if it had been put on paper would certainly fill a small town library.

Only a small part of this literary treasure, which in many cases had been inherited by generation alter generation for more than a thousand years, survived the chaos and destruction which were the immediate result of the Polynesians' first contact with our Western culture. Priests and scholars, like chiefs and other political and military leaders, succumbed to furious wars and epidemics in the violent break between old and new, and those who survived soon found that new leaders had taken their place.

Overpowered by the white men's superior material culture, the Polynesians quickly abandoned not only their stone tools and bark clothes, but also their old gods and their old faith. All that was new and strange became good and admirable, while all that was Polynesian came to be regarded only as something primitive, barbaric, and inferior. The new generation, which claimed to be civilized and Christian, took no interest in its fathers' culture and traditions, and most of the old men therefore took

their secrets with them to their graves. Some few conscientious and understanding men - generally missionaries and explorers - tried to note down the Polynesian traditions before they fell into oblivion, but what they were able to save was naturally only a fraction.

This rapid transformation of Polynesian society took place on most of the islands as long ago as the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century, and if, for example, one asks a present-day Polynesian in Tahiti or Hawaii about the past, he generally knows no more than the man in the street knows about early English history. Rather less.

Of course there are a few cultured Tahitians or Hawaiians who know the main outlines of their people's history and traditions, but if so it is second-hand knowledge, a knowledge based upon what anthropologists and archaeologists have been able to learn about conditions in the past. Between most of the Polynesians of today and their so called primitive ancestors there lie, broadly speaking, many generations, and the direct oral tradition is definitely broken.

But in this respect, as in others, the Tuamotu group is an exception. While on practically all the other groups of islands in Polynesia the good old heathen era lies 100 to 150 years back in time, it is only 60 or 70 years since it slowly began to disappear in the Tuamotu islands. Consequently, scattered here and there over the atolls of this group of islands, a few old scholars are to be found who not only know all the traditions of their people but have even seen its native culture with their own eyes. There are certainly not more than a dozen of these old men in the whole group, and significantly enough they are found only in the eastern half of the group, i,e. that part which lies farthest away from Tahiti and civilization. Most of them are the last of the old ruling or learned class, and they themselves were either chiefs or priests before the old social system collapsed.

As the younger generations take no interest whatever in the old literature and the old traditions, it is only a question of time before even this first-hand knowledge of a Polynesian people as it used to be is lost, and as far as one can judge this period cannot be more than about ten years distant.

The Bernice P. Bishop Museum at Honolulu, which has the world’s largest collections of ethnographic objects and documents from Polynesia, was quick to see the great opportunity of saving irreplaceable material in the Tuamotu group and during the 1930’s sent out two expeditions which certainly succeeded in preserving a vast quantity of traditions, genealogies, and songs. After the thorough work done by the Bishop Museum’s expeditions, and well knowing how swiftly all memories of old times disappear, we naturally did not expect to find any ethnographic material of great value on Raroia. Our intention was to search for it

elsewhere in the Tuamotu group, and our reason for taking up our abode on this island was of course another. To be on the safe side, we made a tour of the village immediately after our arrival to see if any ethnographic material of any kind was to be had, but the result was extremely meagre.

Someone had told us before we started from Tahiti that there was a *tahunga*, or learned man, named Tei-hote-pangi on the island, but all our inquiries were met with head-shakings. All the Raroians declared emphatically that they could not remember anyone of that name, and tried instead to interest us in questions of the day. The old heathen times must have been something awful, they thought, with no flour, no bicycles, no proper clothes - and if by any chance anyone knew anything about them, there was absolutely nothing of interest to be heard from him. But if, in spite of everything, we persisted in our desire to know something about these awful times, we ought to apply to Temorere, who had a number of books full of traditions and genealogies and was a mighty learned man.

Of course, we called on Temorere at once, and he declared himself willing to answer all our questions. His books, however, containing genealogies and traditions written down by his father some time in the 1870's, he would on no account show us. This did not surprise us, for the Polynesians generally regard their family books as private documents, which no outside person should see. This attitude is a survival from pre-European times, when genealogies were a family secret and served as a kind of title to possession. By correctly reciting the family's genealogy a man showed that he was the legitimate heir to the family titles and lands, and to betray it to some other person amounted to giving away these privileges. All land is now protected by a legal system on Western lines, but the attitude regarding genealogies still persists.

We made the best of the situation and paid regular visits to Temorere to try to extract from him bit by bit the information we wanted. He received us with great ceremony, and each time we asked a question he put on his home-made spectacles of window-glass, withdrew to a little side room, took out his books, and mumbled to himself for a long time before he finally reappeared with the answer. The songs he gave us tallied quite well with what we had had from other Raroians, but the rest of his information about the old culture was both confusing and contradictory. We gradually became more and more suspicious, but of course it was impossible for us to compare his statements with the original text, as despite all our flattery and attempts at persuasion he refused to show us his books.

After some months our collaboration was interrupted, as Temorere was obliged to make a journey to Tahiti, He left the house in his nephew's charge, and as the nephew and I were particularly good friends a time

came when I could not resist the temptation to try to persuade him to show me Temorere's books (in science as in many other things the end justifies the means). The nephew was surprisingly easy to handle, and soon came creeping round to us one evening with the ardently desired books.

Eagerly, with a trembling hand, I opened one of them. The first page was blank, so was the next, likewise the third, fourth, and all the rest. I opened the next book. It too was empty, but for one genealogy and a few songs. It was the same with all the books. *Temorere was simply a fraud!*

The next person we tried was old Varoa, the former chief of the village, who was considered to be the oldest inhabitant of the island. In order not to lose anything, we asked Tufaka to come with us as interpreter. Varoa had very vague ideas of our method of calculating time, but by cross-examining him about all the cyclones he remembered and comparing what he told us with the official reports published by the meteorological station in Tahiti, we found that when the cyclone of 1878 swept over Raroia he was already married and had two children aged between five and ten.

This meant that he was at any rate over ninety and ought therefore to be able to tell us about the old conditions. He also assured us that he had often taken part in heathen religious ceremonies and even showed us the place where the principal *marae* or altar on Raroia had stood. The more we asked, however, the clearer it became that the worthy Varoa was a little too weak in memory and mentally confused to be able to give us any real information or any connected description. He was often at a loss for words and talked to himself for a long time on end. At last he said:

"Come again early tomorrow morning when it's still cool. It's the sun that makes me muddle-headed."

Of course we returned the next morning at sunrise, but whether it was particularly hot that day or for some other reason, Varoa was just as confused. He again lost the thread of his narrative time after time. In his more lucid moments he had many interesting things to relate, but in between he sat for long periods immersed in his own thoughts or held endless monologues. We had just given up hope of getting any real information out of him when all of a sudden he woke up and said;

"But why don't you ask Te Iho?"

"Who is Te Iho?" I asked.

"He's the last *tahunga*, the last learned man. He knows everything."

"Strange," I said, "but I cannot remember having met anyone of that name."

"That's probably because Te Iho never goes out," said Tufaka. "He sits at home thinking all day."

The name seemed familiar in some curious way, and I therefore asked

what the full name was. It was Te-Iho-a-te-Pange, which of course was simply the correct name of the Tei-hote-pangi whom we had been looking for, and who was clearly not dead at all.

Led by Tufaka we hurried across the village, and soon stood outside Tapakia's foster-son's house, where we were told Te Iho lived. "Where is Te Iho?" Tufaka and I asked almost simultaneously.

Tapalda pointed to a small shed a little way off. We went across and peeped in. The walls were of unpainted galvanized iron, and the only ornament was a soiled picture of Jesus, gaudily coloured like an American cigarette advertisement. In one corner stood a tom sack of kapok 'cotton', the contents of which lay scattered all over the place. The floor consisted of rough unplaned boards which evidently had never been worn smooth by a scrabbing brush. In the midble of the floor an old man lay asleep with an empty jam-pot as pillow!

We called him, and soon he rose and came out into the sunshine. In the half-light of the shed I had not been able to distinguish his features properly, and when I now for the first time saw him in the full light of day I was so astonished that I almost burst out: "But it's a white man!"

His complexion was no darker than that of a southern European; his hair and beard were greyish-white, and his features were not too foreign for him to have played Father Christmas in any English home.

He greeted us amiably with the usual *ia ora na*, and sat down quietly in the doorway waiting for us to explain our errand. We went straight to the point and asked him if he would tell us something about old times. Te Iho leaned forward as if he had not heard, or had not understood our request, looked at us long and curiously, and, quite unexpectedly, began to laugh. But after a time he grew serious again and said:

"Forgive me, but I can't help laughing when you *popaa* ask me about the old times, when nobody else on the island does."

He sat for a moment or two in silence, and then continued;

"Look at my hair. It has been white now since Tapakia was a little boy sailing toy boats made of the halves of coconuts. He's grown up now and himself has children playing on the shore of the lagoon. When my hair first began to grow white I thought: I am an old man now and I feel tired. I have seen Raroia in the old times, when the people still worshipped the old gods and the old customs were still good. I am the last who has the old knowledge. When I die the old times will die with me. I shall collect the young people round me and tell them all that I have seen and heard, so that they and their children shall not be ignorant of where they came from and what their forefathers achieved and how they lived.

"After I had taught the young people all the old songs and dances I could - and they had liked them - but when I asked them to listen to what

their forefathers had thought and experienced they just laughed and said: "Pooh, your boring old stories are not true. We'd rather hear stories about motor-cars and aeroplanes and ships." As my sight was bad even then, I told Tapakia to write down all that I narrated in a big book, but after a few days he got tired, and no one else wanted to, or had time. Then I thought: Perhaps it is God's will that the old times shall die with me.

"But one day there came a boat with three *popaa* on board. They came straight to my house and asked if I would tell them all that I knew. Then I realized that God had not forgotten me and that He had sent the three *popaa* to write down the old knowledge, so that all should understand that it was as important as all that is in the Bible. I therefore replied that I would gladly tell all that I remembered. They were very pleased and promised to come back soon.

When they had gone, all the young people came and said that as three *popaa* had come specially to write down accounts of the old times, these accounts were certainly worth money. They begged me to teach them what I knew so that they too might become rich, and for several weeks I taught them just as Moses taught his people the law on the stone tables. Tapakia actually wrote a whole book full of my teaching, but of course that was still only a small part of all the old knowledge. He gave up before he could write any more, and more and more of them soon began to grow tired. In a few months all had abandoned me and forgotten what I had said. For a long time I waited eagerly for the three *popaa*, but they never came back."

Te Iho smiled sadly and produced an old tin can from an invisible hiding-place. He felt about inside it for a long time and at last fished out the stump of a cigarette, which he lit carefully. Then he gazed reflectively in front of him and continued:

"Since that time fifteen years have passed, or perhaps twenty or twenty-five. How can I tell? No one has asked me about the old times until today - and again it is a *popaa* who asks. Perhaps there is some hidden meaning in this, and I will gladly tell you all you want to know."

We asked him to tell us all that he had once meant to teach the youth of the village.

"It is a long story," said the old man, blinking his eyes, "for it begins with the creation."

We assured him that we had nothing against this, and after a few moments' hesitation, Te Iho at last began to speak again. He began to recite an old *fangu*, or religious song. Naturally, when translated into English prose, most of its beauty is lost, but its contents are in any case interesting enough for me to try to reproduce them. It ran roughly thus:

"In the beginning there was only void. Neither darkness nor light, neither land nor sea, neither sun nor sky yet existed. All was one great, silent, motionless void. Countless ages passed. But then the void began to move. It seethed and grew and at last was transformed into Po, the great night without limit and shape. All was darkness, a deep impenetrable darkness.

"Again countless ages passed, and then Po also began to come to an end. Strange new forces were active, the night was transformed into sea, and in the depths of the sea a new substance was formed. To begin with it was only sand, but the sand became firm soil which grew upwards. At last Fakahotu, the earth mother, revealed herself. Fakahotu spread herself out and became a great land, the first which ever existed. Over Fakahotu, the earth mother, rested Atea, the sky father.

"New ages passed and then two sons were born, Tane and Tangaroa. They looked round them and found that there was neither light nor space. 'Let us separate Atea from Fakahotu,' said Tane to Tangaroa. They tried to lift up Atea but could not move him. Soon, however, the Ru brothers were born, and with their help the attempt was more successful.

"Soon they had separated Atea from Fakahotu and the Ru brothers formed a living pyramid by standing on each other's shoulders. Slowly they lifted up Atea, who at last arched himself as a sky high above the earth. In this way were formed the three spheres - Rangi-po, or the region beneath the surface of the earth and sea, Rangi-marama, the world we live in, and Rangi-reva, the sky above us. Tangaroa became ruler of the sea, while Tane fixed the stars, the sun and moon in the sky and became their ruler.

"Gods, earth, sky, and sea were created. In the sea plants, animals, small creatures, and fish began to increase. The only thing lacking was man. Then Tangaroa created Tiki, who thus was our ancestor. After a time Tiki wished no longer to be alone, and then Tangaroa created a woman from a heap of sand and gave her to Tiki. Her name was therefore Hina-ahu-one, 'Hina made of sand'.

"From Tiki and Hina all mankind is descended. Time passed and generation followed generation. At last was born Maui, who was the greatest of our forefathers. Maui found that the days were too short and therefore caught the sun with a kind of lasso. He did not let it go again till it had promised to move more slowly. Maui also created the first dog and gave fire to men, but his greatest deed was done when he fished up a new land from the depths of the sea. With a large hook fastened to a long line he drew up Raroia and all the other Tuamotu islands. In this way Maui completed the creation."

We thanked Te Iho and came back next day curious to hear the continuation of the story. Te Iho had promised to tell us the history of the whole island and people right down to our days. To get him to continue where he had stopped the day before I asked him:

"But if it was Maui who fished up Raroia and all the other islands round about here, where did the actual creation take place?'

Te Iho looked at me with his humorous friendly eyes and said, laughing quietly;

"Don't you know that? The *popaa* usually know that it took place in Paradise."

Then he grew serious and continued:

"But I often wonder if your Paradise is not the scene of our creation too. All things considered, may not Tiki and Hina be only other names for Adam and Eve? However that may be, at any rate we Polynesians know the name of our Paradise, and you *popaa* do not. Come nearer, and you shall hear the truth about our origin, as my father taught it me word for word."

Te Iho shut his eyes to collect his thoughts for the impending test of memory, muttered quietly to himself lor a few moments, and then began to recite in a clear ringing voice:

Havaiki-te-a-runga,
Havaiki-te-a-raro,
Havaiki-tautau-mai,
Havaiki-taidau-atu,
Havaiki-ka-apari-i-ie-iua-o-Atea,
Havaiki-nui-a-mea.....

We understood only a word here and there, but we were so fascinated by the rhythm and melody that we did not want to interrupt Te Iho for explanations. In the same sing-song, monotonous tone the old man continued to recite with inspiration the legend of the lost homeland Havaiki, where his fathers had lived long ago in the morning of time. His thin voice came to us like a voice from the past disclosing to us the primeval lore which once was so sacred that not a syllable was ever altered, and no one but the initiated priests knew it.

Suddenly Te Iho checked himself and was again absorbed in his thoughts. I looked at my watch. He had recited for more than half an hour without a break. After a little while he tried to continue, but his memory failed him and he could not find the words. At last he gave up and brought out the old tin can where he was accustomed to store his cigarette ends. He had difficulty in finding them and accordingly poured out the whole contents of the pot. These consisted, besides cigarette ends, of two matchboxes, an onion, and a plastic belt! We were evidently back in modem times.

We continued to visit Te Iho regularly, and gradually the main features of Raroia's strange history began to grow clear to us. It was undeniably a little difficult to piece together the mythical stories of Hawaii and the long sea voyages into a connected account, but, from the moment when a Polynesian exploring expedition first came to Raroia, Te Iho seemed able to give a quite plausible and detailed narrative of his people's destinies. One day, for example, he counted up the links in his family tree, which began with the first inhabitant of the island. There were thirty generations! Counting each generation as eighteen years, this would mean that the island had been inhabited since the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The first man who found Raroia - and at the same time, of course, also the neighbouring island Takume - was a certain Tanearíki, who presumably came from the Marquesas Islands. His grandson Varoa became the first chief or king, and during the following three hundred years this dynasty ruled over the islands. Some time at the beginning of the eighteenth century this reigning family was deposed - according to tradition because the king brought his queen from another island and that a hostile one - and after that power lay in the hands of the minor chiefs of the different clans or sub-groups right down to modern times.

Life in the time of the first chiefs was hard and primitive. The sandy strip of land round the lagoon nourished even fewer plants and animals than in our days, and to begin with there were not even coconut palms. Even the dog was unknown, and when at last it was introduced it was valued primarily for its utility as an article of food. The Raroians still regard dog's flesh as a delicacy and gladly pay a couple of hundred francs for a fat dog. The only clothing was a girdle of plaited pandanus leaves for the men and a fibre skirt for the women. The sleeping mats, which served as mattresses or coverings as they were needed, were of the same material, and the implements were of wood, bone, or mother-of-pearl.

The islanders gradually learned to adapt themselves and make better use of their meagre resources. The most impressive proofs of their foresight and ability are the great taro plantations which they made on the neighbouring island of Takume, where there was more room and a more fertile soil. The tradition which Te Iho recited to us describes in detail how, at the chief Varoa Tikaroa's installation fourteen generations ago, the huge furrows in which the taro was planted were dug with mother-of-pearl spades. (Taro requires constant moisture.)

Not only the inhabitants of Raroia-Takume, which then already formed a political unit, but also guests invited from every part of the Tuamotu group took part in the work, which to judge from its size must certainly have taken several years. The hundreds of furrows, of course no longer used, cover a surface of about one thousand by five hundred yards, and many of them are more than thirty feet deep. Such works as this hardly exist anywhere else in Polynesia.

The social and religious organization which could achieve such a result as this must indeed have been perfect and full of vitality. There were special craftsmen for all important occupations or works. Some were canoe-builders, others house-builders, while a third group manufactured tools. The most important, however, and those enjoying the highest prestige, were the doctors, the priests, and the scholars - the people's spiritual leaders.

Political power, on the contrary, lay in the hands of the chiefs, whose

positions were most often hereditary. They were bold, proud men, who were jealous of their honour and often, like the Viking chiefs, made long voyages of discovery and warlike expeditions to other islands in their large plank ships with double hulls and pandanus sails. Alongside the chief were one or several *kaito* or warrior chiefs; these acted as sort of officers.

Te Iho remembered many of the old heroic songs describing these sea voyages, and sang or recited many of them to us. One of the longest and most beautiful was about a chief's son named Mapu-teretere (Mapu the seafarer) and his journey to Tahiti to fetch his father, who had been captivated by a fair lady there. (Tahiti clearly exercised a strange attraction even in those early times!) The songs gave a detailed account of Mapu's travel route and described in glowing colours all his exploits and combats - in which of course he was always victorious.

Another song cycle was about the hero Honokura, and Te Iho proudly pointed out the stone called Mitimitiakura on which Honokura had stood when he made his speech of greeting to the Raroians, and showed us the stone in the creek by the village to which the warrior hero had made fast his ship. The stone is still called Tangohe after Honokura's ship, and the captains still use it for mooring their schooners.

The Raroians' forefathers, like those of so many other Polynesian peoples, were cannibals. A stranger was always regarded as an enemy, and anyone shipwrecked on the island or driven ashore by the wind was killed and eaten immediately, as the Raroians, like the Fiji cannibals, thought the flesh was best eaten while it still had a sharp salty taste. Similarly, after victory in a battle, all fallen enemies were roasted and eaten at once on the spot. Cannibalism, however, was principally due, not to any desire for human flesh but to a belief that those who ate their enemies magically acquired their strength and vitality.

"To eat an enemy was, moreover, the strongest mark of contempt for him," said Te Iho when, after some hesitation, I questioned him. "For this reason, too, the warriors flung the bones over their shoulders when they had eaten them clean. But if the enemy had been brave and strong they collected the bones afterwards to use them as tools. My father once gave me a drill which was made from a leg-bone of Reao's greatest warrior. I have never seen such a drill. I used it, by the way, when I made the bench you are sitting on, when I was a young man. See how neat and level the holes are."

Te Iho himself had never seen a cannibal feast, but Varoa, who was sitting by him with his great-great-grandson on his knee, narrated how as a child he had twice been an eye-witness of battles against foreign invaders, both of which ended in the Raroians devouring their fallen enemies.

"I myself was too small to take part in it, but father was one of the leading warriors and was always served next after the chief," said Varoa. "I remember that father often used to complain that the Tuamotu warriors were too tough. The Tahitians were fatter and better."

"What barbarism!" said Tufaka, who was a good Christian.

But Varoa took no notice.

"The children were the best and tastiest of all, though," he added, laughing, and looked at his great-great-grandson so approvingly that Tufaka was frightened and took the child away from him.

We thought it was time for a change of subject and asked Te Iho when the first whites had come to the island.

"It was when my father was a young man," he said after a few moments' reflection. "They were two *popaa* who came in a schooner and wanted mother-of-pearl in exchange for other things. The next time they came the warrior chief assembled all the men and said: "Why should we work and dive for mother-of-pearl to get all the new things there on board the ship? If we kill all the people on board we can take what we want without giving anything in return." Several men were angry, too, because the foreigners had seduced their women, and they supported the proposal.

"The warriors crept on board the schooner by stealth and killed the crew with their spears. One *popaa*, however, managed to escape in a ship's boat to another island, where he found another schooner which took him to Papeete.The French soon learned what had happened and sent out an expedition to investigate. The officials arrived on a gunboat, landed, and asked who had led the men in the attack on the schooner. The warrior chief and two others said it was their plan, and by way of punishment the Frenchmen hanged them from a palm down by the shore.

"After a time a chief came on a visit from the eastern islands, to which the French had not come. He wanted all the Tuamotu fighting men to resist and take their revenge. My father, who was the leading *tahunga* and had great prestige, said it was better to be friends with the French, as they had many new things which it was good to get in exchange. Most thought that my father was right, but the chief and some of the fighting men accompanied the men from the eastern islands when they went back. Time passed, and when at last we heard that they had all been drowned in a storm my father became chief. So we got peace.

"As my father grew older more and more schooners came, seeking mother-of-pearl and coconut oil in exchange for what they brought. Often there were *popaa* on board, but they were always afraid and never came ashore without firearms. But one day a *metua* (priest) came, and he was another kind of *popaa*. He was alone, and had clothes which reached down to the ground and a long beard. He was friendly and cheerful and

often played to us on his *vivo* (flute) and taught us many songs. He cured side persons and showed us how to build better canoes and houses. When the schooners came to get mother-of-pearl he helped us, so that we got twice as many new things as before. He taught many to read and write and gave us many pictures which were pretty to look at. He was often with our *tahungas* and talked to them of his god, who would prevent all wars and make all men happy.

"We had already heard of this god from men from Anaa who had been converted to the new religion - they were called Israela [the original Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints before the split] and several men on Raroia had become disciples. The *metua*,strangely enough, seemed hostile toward these converts and continued to visit the *tahungas*. A long time passed before he was able to make them listen seriously and discuss his teaching. At last the *tahungas* began to believe in the new god, and when they declared that they would no longer worship the old gods all the rest did as they did.

" 'The *tahungas* themselves know best which are the right gods, and if they believe in the new *metua's* god, he is certainly the best for us too,' all the people said. In a week we destroyed all our altars and were converted.

"*Metua* Apetero [Albert] remained among us and helped us to build the first church, which is the same we still use today. It took three years to build and was finished in 1875, which is written in large figures over the door. But to begin with no one would go to the church. Everyone said, 'No doubt the new religion is better, but why should we shut ourselves into a big house to worship the *popaa* god?' So they continued to go to the great *marae*, or cult site, which lay down by the landing place in the bay. One of *Metua* Apetero's successors, however, was a wise man, and he hit upon a shrewd way of changing this. He had the biggest stone of the *marae* broken loose, transported it up to the church, and used it as a step outside the entrance. After that the church was always full.

"We built a prison next door to the church, but it looked so gloomy and depressing when it was finished that we seldom used it, although *Metua* Apetero wanted it. We promised never to kill anyone any more and to treat all *popaa* well, and soon more schooners were coming than we had ever seen before. They brought many curious new things, among them rice, flour, and canned food which we saw for the first time.

"To begin with many people laid the bags of rice straight on the fire and mixed the flour with water and tried to drink it as soup, but we gradually learnt how to use the new *popaa* food. Since that time no one had grown any taro."

The next time I talked to Te Iho, I asked him, "How many inhabitants were there on Raroia when you were young, before everything was

changed?"

Te Iho counted on his fingers for a while and then answered:

"In the village here there were over seven hundred and in the village on the other side of the lagoon between three and four hundred."

"That makes more than a thousand," I said. "Today there are only just over a hundred. How has it come about that the population of Raroia has been so heavily reduced in only seventy-five years?"

Te Iho reflected and answered;

"Many have gone to Tahiti and stayed there. Others have shipped on board the schooners and never come back. New diseases broke out, and as we did not know how to cure them, many, many died. Our own *tahunga* knew how to cure all the diseases that were on the island in the old times, but against the new and unknown diseases they could do nothing. A number, of course, disappeared in the hurricanes and cyclones."

At our request Te Iho told the dramatic story of the worst cyclone that ever afflicted Raroia. This cyclone, like most of the others which have ravaged French Oceania, originated somewhere in the neighbourhood of the equator and swept southward on a semicircular track.

It began on the morning of 14th January 1903, and passed right through the Tuamotu group just west of Raroia at a speed which meteorologists estimated at between fifteen and twenty miles an hour. The vortex of the cyclone itself was 250 miles in diameter, but the huge waves it stirred up had devastating effects 600 miles away from the cyclone's centre. During the bare twenty-four hours that the cyclone lasted 517 natives in all lost their lives in the Tuamotu group, most of them taken by surprise by the gigantic swell the cyclone stirred up. Te Iho knew nothing of these bare facts taken from French official publications, but his account was none the less dramatic for that.

As usual he lit the stump of a cigarette and meditated for a time before he began;

"The sun had already passed its highest point and gone a little way down towards the horizon in the west, and it must have been about two o'clock according to your way of calculating, when the cyclone began. I was on my way to one of my friends and had with me some of my grandchildren, running and jumping in front of me. I had just turned into the main village street when I heard a rustling in the palm-tops. The wind blows up quite suddenly and unexpectedly here on Raroia, as you know, so I paid no particular attention to the noise. Before I had gone ten steps, however, coconuts began to shower down on the ground round me, and when I had at last got hold of all the children the wind was already so strong that boughs and leaves were being tom off. This is a danger sign, for it means that old weak palms can be broken clean off. I picked the

children up and began to run. Just as I reached the nearest house there was a crash and a tall palm fell a little farther down the village street. At the same moment the rain came. You know how it can rain on Raroia, but this time it was more violent than you can imagine. It was as if the breakers on the outside of the reef had flung themselves upon the houses, and soon we were all wet through to the skin.

"After a time the chief came and said that everyone was to assemble in the church, where *Metua* Amedée was. Some of my friends who were in the house looked after two of the children, while Mahia there in the corner, who was not more than five, hung round my neck. When we came out into the street the wind had become so strong that the coconuts were no longer falling straight down as they usually do, but came flying sideways, as if they had been shot from guns like those you see on board the warships in Papeete harbour. One of my relations was hit by a coconut and fell down unconscious. We did not notice it till we had reached the church and had to go out again to help him.

"It was better inside the church, for the walls were several feet thick and the galvanized roof was watertight. When we counted all the people who had assembled in the church we found that seven were missing. Two parties of five men each went out to look for them. One party came back with four women and two children. The other party never came back. *Metua* Amedée bandaged all those who were injured and talked to us till we grew calm.

"One of the old men who was rather weak in the head cried out that the deluge had come and that we ought to build an ark. We told him that we had no time to build an ark, but he did not believe us and wanted to go out into the storm to build one himself. Then the chief said that there was no point in building an ark, for there were no animals on Raroia to fill it with. The new Noah thought that was good sense and said nothing more. *Metua* Amedée said that gigantic waves would certainly come and wash over the island and therefore we ought not to stay in the church, where we should be caught like rats in a trap. Some proposed that we should climb up into the palms or on to the roof, but of course that was impossible in the high wind, so we decided instead to make for the highest ground on the island. The churchyard lay a little higher and was moreover surrounded by a thick stone wall, so we all tried to get across to it.

"The wind had now become so strong that no one could walk upright any longer, and we therefore crawled on all fours. *Metua* Amedée tried to speak to us, but we could no longer hear what he said. All the houses on the west side of the island except Tepuka's had collapsed, and wooden planks and roof-plates were whirling past.

"Tepuka, who had always been very proud of his fine wooden house,

wanted to crawl over to it to see if he could save anything. We tried to prevent him, but he went all the same. He had almost reached the house when it suddenly came crashing down. The wind took hold of the galvanized iron roof and it came sweeping right towards the spot where Tepuka was. He tried to get out of the way but could not. His fine bright metal roof, which he had worked so hard to get, cut him right in two. The last I saw of him was his hand clinging convulsively to a corner of the roof.

"We made two big heaps of stones in the churchyard and sought shelter under their lee. Two hours may have passed, perhaps three, since the cyclone began, when we heard a roaring noise which even drowned the thundering of the wind and rain. It was the first tidal wave from the cyclone. It was not high and just washed over the island. The sea began to rise at the same time, however, and soon the waterline was high up among the palms on the lower level of ground.

"Then the next wave came, and it compelled us to sit up to keep our heads above the surface of the water. Some were seized with panic and turned back to the church, but as luck had it they were washed out through the windows every time they tried to get in. After a time they came back and clung tight to the heaps of stones as the rest of us were doing.

"For a long time the water rose slowly but inexorably; it was as if we had been in the middle of the strongest current of the Punaruu river in Tahiti. Broken-off palm trunks, gables of houses, flowers, furniture, and canoes floated past and were swallowed up by the eddies which had formed here and there where the flow of the water met with resistance. All of a sudden broken wooden chests and ship's planks came floating along, and we realized that a vessel had got into the midst of the cyclone and had been smashed to pieces. We felt thankful that we had ground under our feet, although we found it hard to stay on it.

"The sun had already disappeared when the cyclone began and it was almost as dark as at night. How long we lay there in the churchyard I don't know, but when the fifth wave came - Metua Amedée counted them - I saw a star in a rift in the clouds and realized that evening must have come. The fifth wave reached about our waists, and we were compelled to take most of the children on our shoulders. But we noticed to our joy that as the waves became more violent the wind and rain grew less. We began, therefore, to think of trying to climb up into the palm trees.

"When the seventh wave came and washed round us up to our chests no one but *Matua* Amedée would remain in the churchyard any longer. We therefore followed the current, clung to the first coconut palm within reach, and clambered up. Many of the women and old people were so tired that they could not climb up, but the chief found a rope and we hoisted

them up into the palmtops with it and tied them fast. I myself ended up on the roof of the prison, the only house besides the church which had withstood the storm. I was so tired that I stayed there. It was positively the first time that the prison had served any reasonable purpose.

"The seventh wave washed *Matua* Amedée away, but he made his way back to the churchyard and shouted that he would rather die there than leave his place. We all realized that the eighth wave would be the end of him, and we were sorry it should be so, for *Matua* Amedée was always helpful and kind. But the eighth wave never came. Instead the water began to fall slowly, and next morning we were all able to climb down out of the trees. Eleven Raroians had lost their lives in this cyclone, the worst I have ever experienced," Te Iho concluded.

Te Iho's story set the Raroians' imaginations working, and for several days we heard of nothing but cyclones and storms. Many people were still alive who had been through the cyclone of 1903, and they related their own personal experiences during the catastrophe. All, however, agreed as to the main outlines of what had happened, and confirmed everything that Te Iho had said. Similarly all agreed that the next, and to date the last cyclone, that of 1906, had passed at a much greater distance and had been much less violent and dangerous.

These natural disasters also brought in their train a definite break with the past. When the cyclone burst over the island in 1903 there were still many houses built in the Tuamotu style, and old objects and implements were still used to a great extent. The violent tidal waves which washed over the island carried away these last remains of the native culture, and when after the calamity the Raroians set out to replace what had been lost they naturally found it simpler and quicker to buy what they needed on board the schooners than try to imitate the work of earlier craftsmen.

Even more disastrous was the disappearance of the old family books. These contained genealogies and other traditions, which the Raroians had noted down immediately after the first missionaries had taught them to write. When they, like so much else, were lost in these natural calamities, the last link which united the Raroians with their past was broken.

According to Te Iho, all the family books without exception had disappeared in the first deluge of 1903, but for safety's sake we made a tour of the village to ask if by chance any remained. The result was only headshakings and vigorous *aita, aita* (no, no), till we came to Tehei's house. To our great astonishment, as soon as we had explained our errand he said:

'"It's not true that all the old family books were destroyed in the 1903 cyclone. My grandfather lived on Hao then and he had with him four books, which thus were saved. Several years later he moved back to

Raroia and brought the books with him. Perhaps they are still somewhere here in the house. I don't know exactly, for I've never thought about them."

Marie-Thérèse and I eagerly helped him search the house from top to bottom but without any result. At last Tehei said:

"They may be at my grandmother's. She kept a lot of things when my grandfather died. If you like I'll go over to her and ask."

He disappeared. In a quarter of an hour he returned.

"You should have come ten years ago," he said gloomily. "When my grandfather died my grandmother and my aunt Teua collected the books and all the other old rubbish there was in the house and burnt them. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped now."

We wanted to have this confirmed - or perhaps we still had a faint hope that the books had not gone up in smoke after all - and therefore paid a visit to Teua. However, she confirmed that she had torn up the books and then burnt them.

"Are you sure you burnt every scrap of them?" I tried lamely.

"Yes, certainly, but I used some of the pages as wrapping paper."

This confession naturally did not raise our spirits. Just as we were about to go Teua added amiably:

"For your sake I'd like to have the books back, but the only thing I can give you is the family tree, which I copied before I burnt them."

We could hardly believe our ears! And we were still more astonished when Teua produced an account-book with 'MADE IN U.S.A' in large printed letters on the cover and gave it to us. We did not need to turn over its pages for long to discover that it contained not only an imposing family tree - more than 5,000 names on the 200 pages - but also quantities of songs, legends, and traditions which in one way or another had some connection with the family.

We decided to carry out an interesting experiment. Next time we called on Te Iho we took Teua's book with us, and asked him to recite a long *fangu*, or religious song, which we knew that he had by heart. Without hesitation he recited the whole hymn from beginning to end. which took about ten minutes. We followed with the book all the time and found to our amazement that his oral version tallied *word for word* with the text we had before us. Te Iho could hardly have given us better proof that he really was a genuine *tahunga* who had piously and faithfully preserved the traditions of his people.

CHAPTER SIX

Life Story

The average Englishman and the Raroians - What happens at a birth - Curious baby care - Alarming statistics - Naming - Why not Koratika? - System of adoption - Duties in early youth - Unrestricted freedom — Adolescent difficulties unknown - Practical education in sex matters - A twelve-year-old mother - Trial marriage — A colourful wedding "Who is married to whom?" - Complicated family conditions A love story - How a family spends its time - Tehei as film hero - Papeete calls - Fleeting sorrow

THE ‘average American’ is, as is well known, a statistical construction whose equivalent it is best not to seek for in the world of reality. Extremely few people of flesh and blood, one can be sure, correspond in all respects to the mathematical average; indeed, strictly speaking, there should be several kinds of 'average American’ instead of just one. Of course, the reason is that in a society like ours we are divided into countless professions, interests and classes, all with different conditions of life, habits, and ideals.

But it fe quite different on Raroia. The uniformity is astonishing, and it is possible to describe the course of an ‘average’ Raroian’s life with much greater likelihood of the chosen examples being representative of the whole population than if one set out to describe the ways of an 'average American’. Let us see how such a life story takes shape.

What takes place when a new member of the happy island community comes into the world we saw for the first time in the house of Tinorua and Hamau. They are our nearest neighbours, and we often look in on them for a bit of a chat. One day we found Tinorua alone on the pandanus mat in front of the house, which rather surprised us, as the couple are usually inseparable. Still we did not think of asking after Hamau, but began to discuss copra and fishing with Tinorua. In a little while he got up in the middle of a lively description of the catching of different kinds of shark and said casually:

"Wait a minute. I'll just go in and have a look at Hamau. She’s having a baby."

"Having a baby?" I said in amazement. "Then why are you sitting here talking to us?"

"Oh," Tinorua replied, "she'll be all right. She never has any

difficulties."

Of course we knew that Hamau was expecting a baby, but both she and Tinorua had lately declared that the happy event would not take place for some weeks. When Tinorua reappeared we reminded him of this and inquired anxiously how Hamau was. He did not seem to share our misgivings, but replied calmly:

"Oh, it's time all right. We always lose count after a few moons."

"Is there no woman in the village who helps with deliveries?' Marie-Thérèse asked cautiously.

"No," said Tinorua, "here on Raroia every family looks after itself. But if you'll give me a hand it would be good, of course."

We had not much experience of deliveries, but naturally did not want to let our friends down. While Marie-Thérèse remained behind to arrange everything, I hurried back to our house to fetch *The Perfect Baby Book*, an American handbook on the care of babies which we always carried in our luggage as a precaution. When I came bade I found Marie-Thérèse seriously agitated.

"Nothing is ready for the child," she declared. "There's no clean linen, no hot water, no cotton-wool, no spirits, no nappies, no clothes!'

We asked Tinorua how this could have happened.

"But one only wants a few bits of cloth to wrap the child in," he said in astonishment. "When the rags get dirty we throw them away and put on new ones."

To show how simple it was, he took some old shirts from a corner and tore them into pieces. Marie-Thérèse and Iexchanged glances, tacitly agreeing to give a demonstration of modern delivery-room technique and baby care.

To heighten the effect we fetched our entire medicine chest. Then we sat down on it and studied *The Perfect Baby Book*. It proved to justify its name, for it contained everything from diet lists for the expectant mother to psycho-analytical advice and photographs of toys suitable for different ages. We turned up the chapter, which was, with singular appropriateness, headed 'The Right Start'. It began with a summary of the pros and cons of delivery in the home and in hospital. We skipped this and came to a detailed description of what the expectant father should do to conquer his nervousness during the time of waiting. We looked at Tinorua, but could not discover any of the symptoms described. We therefore went on, and came by degrees to a list of the things required for a delivery. We decided to content ourselves with half of these, but even this was so much that we asked Tinorua to send for his mother to help with the work.

In a little while she came, and was so astonished at all our preparations that she was obliged to fetch two more relations to show them what we

had done. We hailed the reinforcement with joy and set them all to work heating up water. There was not a saucepan which held more than three and a half pints, but by collecting all that the neighbours had and making each relation look after two we hoped to get enough hot water.

We worked energetically for a time. Then Tinorua suddenly called for Marie-Thérèse, and she disappeared into the house with him. Five minutes later she put out her head and cried:

"It's over now. Bring the water!"

"The water isn't hot yet," replied a voice from the kitchen. "Can't you wait a little while while I go and fetch more wood and coconut fibre?"

Marie-Thérèse gave a sigh of resignation and took out a bottle of coconut oil. That was at any rate better than cold dirty water. The grandmother had followed the course of events with dignified calm from her place in a corner of the room. Now, however, she could keep silent no longer, but said in annoyance:

"Why don't you do as in my young days? Then we used to wash all the new-born babies in the lagoon."

"But didn't many children die?" I interjected cautiously.

"No, not at all," the old woman snorted. "It was only the weak children that died, and they wouldn't have lived anyhow."

In a short time both Hamau and her little girl lay wrapped in blankets. Both looked fit and well and, as we evidently could do nothing more, we went home and studied the next chapters of *The Perfect Baby Book* so as to be able to impart to Tinorua and Hamau all the latest observations and experiences of medical science in the matter of baby care. When we returned a few hours later crammed with knowledge Hamau was squatting in a corner talking and laughing with some relations.

"The baby's begun to eat already,"she cried on catching sight of us.

Quite true. Beside her Tinoraa squatted on the floor with the new-born child on his knee. In one hand he held some green blades of grass.

"Are you giving the child grass to eat?" we asked in alarm.

"No," Tinoma replied soothingly. "I'm dipping them in sugar and water and letting her suck them."

We summarized briefly the main outlines of modern ideas on nutrition, exactly as we had learnt them from *The Perfect Baby Book*, but Tinoraa only laughed and went on giving the baby sugar and water. I suddenly noticed a smell of cigarette smoke in the room,

"Cigarette smoke is not good for new-born babies," I said conscientiously. "Who has been smoking?"

"Oh," said Tinorua, "It was Hamau" - and they both laughed again till they nearly choked.

Marie-Thérèse and I realized at last that both we and the book were a

little too advanced for Raroian conditions and discreetly withdrew.

All deliveries take place in the same painless, free, and easy (not to say careless) manner. Most women recover surprisingly quickly. Hamau was up and walking the very day after the delivery and began to work as usual on the third day. But, contrary to the grandmother's assurances, infant mortality is by no means normal, but appallingly high, mainly, of course, as the result of ignorance and negligence. Our researches showed that, in the last few years, of 77 babies born alive no fewer than 17 have died in their first year. In England, of 1,000 children born alive in the last year or two, about 29 have died before reaching the age of one. The corresponding figure for Raroia is 220!

The most usual causes of death have been chills and infections, which is not surprising seeing that the clothes in most cases consist only of a few rags or towels, and that parents often insist on talking children only a month old with them when they go to the islands in the lagoon to make copra. Some time ago, a man even came in a sailing canoe from the neighbouring island of Takume to report a birth to Teka, who is chief of that island also. To confirm his statement he had brought the new-born child with him.

Another cause of the huge infant mortality is certainly the great number of premature births. In such cases the Raroians rightly consider that extraordinary measures should be taken, and therefore they give the poor little wretches grated coconut as soon as they can open their mouths. Few have survived this diet, but those who have done so are really first-class men and women, which can hardly be the result of the coconuts, as the Raroians think, but must no doubt be ascribed instead to the simple fact that only the strongest survive.

If the new-born child remains alive, the next important event in its life is baptism. The significant fact that the Raroians are citizens of two worlds, the Polynesian and the Western, is shown in their naming. All children are obliged to have two names, one Polynesian and one French. What name or names the child is given is less important. The parents never give a thought to that in advance, and the Polynesian name they fasten on to is the first that some relation suggests. The French name, according to established usage, ought to be that of the saint of the child's birthday, but if the parents do not like that name they take the saint's name for one of the days immediately before or after the birth. As long as they keep to saints' names any will do, even if the names are often old-fashioned.

At any rate this is better than choosing the names of foreign film stars which no one can pronounce, as many parents do in Europe.

The case of Tinorua and Hamau is typical. To begin with they wanted

to call their little girl Reva Anselm. We objected quietly that these were very pretty names, but that Anselm at least was a little unsuitable because it was a man's name. This made them rather crestfallen, but Tinorua turned over the leaves of the almanac for a moment or two and quickly found another name which seemed suitable.

"I think we'll call her Koratika," he said.

"But aren't you going to give her a *popaa* name too, as everyone else does?" I asked.

"Koratika is a *popaa* name," he said resentfully. "She's Penetito's sister. You ought to know that."

We looked in the almanac, and Tinorua proudly pointed out a passage where Scolastique was printed in largo letters - and Scolastique was certainly Koratika in Polynesian. Alter a little persuasion, however, he agreed to call the little girl Martine. Of course there was no particular reason for calling her Martine, but at any rate it was a name which nobody would laugh at.

The only French names in daily use are, significantly enough, those which have been rewritten according to the rules of Polynesian phonetics. Often, however, the changes are so great that it is almost impossible to recognize them. At any rate it was a long time before we discovered that Kilceria was Cecilia, that Peni was Benjamin, Titin, Christine; Ruita, Louise; Tihoni, John; and Teretia, Thérèse.

Up to the age of two or three the lives of Raroian children differ very little from those of their English and other European contemporaries, except, of course, as already stated, that they are not cared for nearly as well or as hygienically. At about this age a great change often takes place for many of the children: they are adopted! Adoption takes place to an extent quite unknown to us; more than a third of the children can be sure of changing their families before the age of five. Boys are more valued than girls because they always mean more copra workers, and it is therefore commoner to hand over a girl than a boy. Curiously enough it is not only childless families who adopt; even families who have already four or five children of their own do not hesitate to increase the number by another one or two. It often happens, too, that one child is handed over at the same that another is adopted. This custom is typically Polynesian and is so old that it is now difficult to explain how it arose. The Raroians at any rate are satisfied with the good old familiar explanation that it has always been done.

Of course all this adoption is illegal, for according to French law, which in this as in so many other cases exists unaltered in French Oceania, no one may legally adopt anyone till he or she has reached the age of forty. The natives, however, pay no attention to this, or any other laws

which do not harmonize with their customs, and regard a verbal agreement as binding. It is seldom that parents take back their children, but despite this the system has a serious disadvantage. Adopted children are in an insecure position materially, and whether they inherit anything or not depends entirely on the goodwill of their adoptive parents. In the cases we know of from Raroia the adopted children have, significantly enough, inherited considerably less than the children by blood.

That adoption does not take place before the age of two or three, or in some cases still later, is due simply and solely to the Raroians' peculiarly realistic attitude. They want to see how the child is turning out before they adopt it. A modern child psychologist would probably consider it reprehensible to try to transplant a child so late, but in the conditions prevailing on Raroia this is certainly of no great importance.

In contrast to what we are accustomed to, adoption seldom involves a sudden and definite change of environment. Instead, an adopted child slowly and gradually fits into its place in the new family. Nor is contact with the real parents and brothers and sisters ever broken, and as the greatest possible distance between two houses is about three hundred yards, these can continue to keep an eye on the child after it has moved to its adoptive parents.

It often happens, even, that the child lives now with one family and now with the other, alternately. For Raroian children there is nothing peculiar and abnormal about this, as they have several papas and mamas from birth. There are indeed no special words for uncle and aunt in the Polynesian language; these relations are called father and mother and are regarded and treated in the same way as the real parents. A few parents more or less, therefore, mean nothing to a Raroian child.

Children begin to have certain duties at the age of three. The Raroians' view is that the children, like all the other members of the family, ought to make themselves useful, and they give even quite small children astonishingly heavy and difficult tasks. Children of four or five are sent regularly to fetch water from the large communal tank; many of them do as many as ten trips a day with their gallon bottles. Others are set to grate coconuts, wash up, or do other kitchen work.

A girl of eight washes, irons, and cooks, while a boy of the same age helps to make copra or is sent out fishing. At about the same age many girls begin to look after their younger brothers and sisters, which does not mean just that they are told to keep an eye on them now and then, but that they have also to wash, dress, and occupy them - in other words, entirely replace the parents. It is quite usual, too, for a boy or girl to be left behind in the village with a solitary grandmother to keep house when the family goes to the islands in the lagoon for several weeks to make copra.

The Raroians are logical. As they set children to do adults' work, they regard them too as grown up. There are no secrets from them, and they learn at an early age to take a realistic, practical view of life. Parents are seldom uneasy about their children or ask what they are doing; they take it for granted that the children can look after themselves. As soon as they have discharged their duties - but not before - they have unrestricted freedom and can do what they like. Many parents even go so far as to let their children decide, even if they know that their decisions are unwise or hasty. It has often happened, for example, that they have handed back medicine which we have given them with the naive, revealing explanation that their children will not take it because it tastes nasty!

A typical case was that of Rari, a little girl of four. She had a serious attack of influenza and a high temperature, for which we had prescribed sulphathiazole. When we came to see her again her parents declared that we must give her some other medicine, as the child could not keep the sulphathiazole down but was continually throwing it up. We were putting ourselves to much trouble to find some medicine which would suit her better, when a friend in the family disclosed to us that what we had been told was not true. The little girl was simply spitting out the sulphathiazole because she did not like the taste. The parents naturally preferred telling us a lie to making the wretched child take the medicine. Compulsion and corporal punishment are absolutely taboo in the bringing up of children in Polynesia.

As a result of the children beginning to work and take responsibility at an early age they make strikingly rapid progress, and when only ten or twelve both boys and girls have nothing more to learn - they can do everything that grown-ups can do. Many are also fully developed physically, while others may take a few more years to mature.

In our so-called civilized communities adolescent difficulties, which make themselves felt more or less at this age, are generally attributed to the biological transformation from child to adult. Several anthropologists, however, have pointed out that in many primitive societies this transition is not at all, as with us, a critical period of storm and confusion, but a quiet harmonious stage of life. In other words, the causes of adolescent difficulties are not biological but rather social. The conditions on Raroia seem to confirm this, and a comparison with English conditions is really quite instructive.

For an American boy or girl adolescence is the time when adaptation to the adult world begins in earnest, a time when a career is to be chosen, and a time when the family and society make demands which are often mutually conflicting. This can only create uncertainty and a spirit of rebellion. Further, economic reasons and long professional training

compel most young people to wait many more years before they can start a family, and the natural result is sex problems and personal difficulties.

For a boy or girl on Raroia everything is different. They are at home from an early age in the limited world which the village and island form. The choice of a profession is no problem, as specialization is unknown and a boy continues to make copra like his father and grandfather before him as a matter of course, while it is equally a matter of course for a girl to become a mother and housewife. There are no economic obstacles, since the island directly or indirectly gives everyone a secure livelihood, and the young people can marry as soon as they like.

Finally, sexual difficulties and repressions are quite unknown. The Raroians' attitude to sex life is open and candid, and least of all are there any secrets about it. The whole family lives and sleeps in the same room, so that the children have an opportunity of finding out all they want to know at an early age. Both young and old discuss quite openly details that we can speak of only in the greatest intimacy or at the most describe in scientific works with Latin technical terms. As is to be expected, the symptoms which we consider typical of adolescence are absent in the young people of Raroia, and instead of being uncertain, split, and rebellious, they are open, merry, and sure of themselves.

This undisturbed transition from child to adult was marked in old days by sensual dances and love feasts, whose motto seemed to be 'one for all and all for one'. Many old people have told me with regret of their happy youth, and if they are to be believed they led during these years of transition a kind of Freudian dream existence, in which no one needed to seek for partners and fidelity was a breach of the rules.

On moonlit nights the young people used to assemble in some glade in the palm forest for singing, dancing, and amorous games, and the boys and girls who had most love affairs and were most accomplished in this field had great prestige. On Raroia, as on most of the islands, there were traditional meeting-places which the parents helped their children to arrange, and more than one thoughtful mother helped her daughter to plait soft pandanus mats which were spread out under the palms.

These public games of a sexual nature had above all an important social function: they were, as it were, a long series of trial marriages and helped the young people to find the right partner for life. It was therefore, despite vigorous efforts, a long time before the missionaries succeeded in putting them down, and they did not positively disappear till the population had been so catastrophically reduced that there were too few young people left to be able to continue them with profit. This does not mean that the young people in our days are more restrained, but simply and solely that the outward forms of this period of trial and play have

become less conspicuous and startling.

Thus, most of the young people on Raroia have their first sexual experiences as early as twelve or thirteen. As modem preventive methods are unknown, it is not long before the results of these associations begin to appear - if the girls are not already sterile. The youngest mother in memory is Hinano, who was only twelve when she had her first child. But all except Hinano consider this a little too early. (Hinano has since then had three more children by three different men.) But there are plenty of mothers of thirteen and fourteen, and fifteen is regarded as a mature, respectable age.

Most expectant mothers seem, before the child arrives, to have very vague ideas as to who the father can be, but when it has once been born the matter is quite simply and quickly decided by seeing whom it is most like. The male indicated usually undertakes fatherhood without a murmur - presumably for the simple reason that it does not involve any trouble or obligations. If the parties want to come together they are simply glad to have a child to start with, and if they want to continue to live a free life there is always some relation who will adopt it with pleasure. The social problems are as non-existent as the economic. The Raroians are so blissfully out of date that they do not understand the difference between so-called legitimate and illegitimate children.

But, someone may ask, are the Raroians not afraid of contracting venereal diseases through all these free liaisons?

As regards syphilis the answer is very simple. They have no reason for being careful, as they have all had this disease for a long time, in most cases from birth. But they have some fear of other venereal diseases, and it is significant that the Raroian women in general avoid contact with sailors and other casual visitors. Of course a Raroian can contract a venereal disease during a visit to Papeete, but as everyone on the island hears news of this kind at once, the risks of infection are reduced.

After a period of free liaisons most young people feel ready to set up house with one of their opposite numbers. But no one takes their living together seriously at this stage, and few whom we have asked have continued to live with their partners for long. Many have had two or three marriages of this kind, and some seem never to get beyond this state. Any children resulting from these marriages are handed over to relations as easily and casually as before. If, however, a couple continue to live together for a long time and have several children, it is considered good form to be properly married.

In the Polynesian view the most important parts of a wedding are the feast and the ceremony in church. On the other hand, the legal form of marriage can, according to the Raroians, be dispensed with altogether. It

only complicates matters and brings with it economic problems. During our stay on Raroia there has so far been only one wedding, but to make up for it this was a real top-notch Polynesian wedding.

After mature consideration Poekura and Suei had decided to get married. Poekura was fifteen and a pure-blooded Polynesian girl, Suei had a good deal of Chinese blood in his veins and had no idea of his age. They had lived together for more than a year and so were regarded as inseparable.

As all the inhabitants of the village had, of course, been invited, the bride's parents had made a long table of old boxes, with room for fifty persons on each side. When we arrived the feast had already begun, and the guests were busy helping themselves to 'cocktails' of rum, hair oil, and coconut beer out of a large kettle.

In a little while some of the bride's relations began to prepare the earth oven. They dug a large square hole in the ground, about ten feet either way and eighteen inches deep. They laid stones at the bottom of the hole and built a huge fire of palm-logs on top of the stones. When the stones were red-hot they swept away the ashes and spread the food on them. The most important dishes were roast pork, fish, chicken, bread-fruit, and quantities of dumplings wrapped in palm-leaves, but to this everyone added whatever he had been able to get hold of - for example pies, cakes, canned goods, and coconuts. Then the 'cooks' laid big leaves over it all and covered up the hole with sand. While we were waiting till the food was ready we paid another visit to the cocktail pot.

Two hours passed before the hosts at last signified that it was time to open the earth oven. For this important event the bridal pair made their first appearance. Suei was dressed in white linen trousers and a blue silk shirt with a yellow tie; on his feet he wore green polished shoes. Poekura wore a red velvet dress, under which her bare feet peeped out, and naturally she was perspiring heavily.

For the first half-hour after the food had been placed on the table not a sound was heard but the munching of a hundred persons, who eagerly licked their fingers clean between each course. Then their tongues were suddenly loosed and eloquence began to flow, vehement and unchecked. As Poekura's father had looked rather too deeply into the cocktail pot, it was her uncle who opened the long series of speeches in his stead. Then came the turn of the chief, the vice-chief, and the bridegroom's father, and then, in order of rank and dignity, all the rest who were able to stand on their legs, about three-quarters of the guests.

An old Polynesian custom demands that a new name shall be taken on each important occasion in life. Thus in earlier times a Polynesian changed his name, for example, on his marriage, the birth of his first child,

a particularly good catch of fish, a successful war, a serious illness, and a child's marriage. As it is rather difficult to keep track of people who change their names ten times during their lives, the authorities have done all that they could to put an end to this custom, and they have now also succeeded in getting most Polynesians to use one principal name, even if it is not the right one.

The wedding guests, however, seemed suddenly to have remembered this old custom, for each speaker unfailingly ended by giving both the bride and bridegroom new names. This would have been all right if it had just been a formality, but every speaker wished them not only to forget all their old names but also, of course, that they should choose from all the new ones just the one given by himself. After a time the verbal duels between the different christeners became so strident that I began to fear that the feast would end in a free fight. The chaos of nomenclature had, too, been so violent for a long time that no one knew any more what the names of the bridal pair were. I therefore rose, succeeded in obtaining silence, and asked that the couple might be given two names which no one had thought of - their old names, Poekura and Suei. All were so delighted at this proposal, which saved everyone’s honour, that the bridal pair still have those names.

Not till a feast of this kind has been held are a couple considered to be properly married. Of course this does not mean that a marriage signed and sealed in this manner lasts for a lifetime. The process of seeking and adapting continues, and the parties often grow tired of each other and 'remarry'. There is, however, a certain difference of degree. While the young people, during the time of trial marriage, change partners perhaps two or three times in a year, the adult Raroians often live together for years before they break up a marriage, and the older they grow the more settled their relations become.

This traditional Raroian custom of experimenting till the right partner is found has naturally been opposed by the missionaries and authorities; but the results of these attempts to convert the Raroians to Christian and Western ideals have been meagre. The first missionaries to visit Raroia tried to introduce some order simply by marrying in church all the couples who were living together and persuading them also to go through a civil marriage ceremony before the chief. Most of them agreed to this, and when the missionaries at last left the island to continue their round tour there was hardly a Raroian over fifteen years old who was not properly and legally married. About a year later the missionaries paid another visit. All the natives, of course, were still married, but a closer inquiry showed that regrettably few of the men and women who were living together were married to one another.

After a few years the confusion had become so great that no one could remember any longer who was married to whom. As a Catholic marriage is indissoluble and a legal divorce meant a lot of writing and juridical embarrassments, the consequence was that the Raroians gradually returned to the old conditions and snapped their fingers at the white men's queer ideas. The missionaries, wiser by the experience, have now abandoned this marriage policy, and marry only those couples who have remained together for a long period of years and whose marriages in consequence seem durable.

Despite these precautionary measures, the situation is still in the highest degree confused and confusing. Let us take an example at random. Our neighbours on the other side of the village street are the Tukaoko family. They consist of Tukaoko himself, a man of about fifty, his wife Hamani, who is some years younger, their daughter Tepivai and her husband and child, their daughter Tuhipa and her husband, and their son Tapanga. Tukaoko and Hamani are neither civilly nor ecclesiastically married to one another.

Hamani in her young days lived with a man from another island, to whom she was married in a Mormon church. After that she lived with a number of Raroia men in turn without being either civilly or ecclesiastically married to any of them. At last she went through the civil marriage ceremony with a man from a neighbouring island. She is still married to him, but has been living with Tukaoko for twenty years. She had two children by her earlier marriages, both of whom have been adopted by other people.

Tukaoko has never been either civilly or ecclesiastically married to anyone. He does not remember how many women he has lived with and has only a vague idea of the number of children whose father he is. He and Hamani have had five children, two of whom died young.

Tapanga, their son, when he was fifteen, married a girl of fourteen because she was expecting a child. Both child and mother died immediately after the delivery, and since then Tapanga has been a bachelor. The daughter Tepivai has had five children, four of whom died in their first year. The fifth has been adopted by Tepivai's half-sister, herself adopted by another family. Tepivai has been ecclesiastically married to a Tahitian for some years. The other daughter, Tuhipa, has no children and has for some time been living with Vanaga, who is legally married to another woman who is living with a Tahitian whose wife has deserted him! I could add a good deal about the earlier connections of the sons-in-law, but that would only be a wearisome repetition of what I have written above.

These continual changes of partners seem generally to take place in a

particularly quiet and peaceful manner. Most of the people we asked explained that they simply got tired of one another and therefore separated. The only story of passion the Raroians can remember is that of Maru and Tefau.

Maru's parents wanted to make a good match and therefore promised her to the son of the merchant Temake. This did not suit Maru, and she began to live with Kainui instead, to the annoyance of her family. They succeeded in being faithful to one another for more than a year, which their parents thought so remarkable that their hearts were softened and they decided to arrange a proper wedding between Maru and Kainui before the priest and the chief. The Raroians shook their heads as usual, saying that it was too much all at once and that an ordinary feast would be enough, but the parents persisted. To celebrate this unusual event both parties' families invited relations and friends from all the islands of French Oceania, and soon the schooners were compelled to make extra voyages with wedding guests.

Kainui’s brother, Tefau, came back from Tahiti to be best man. He had been at school in Papeete for a long time and so had not seen Maru for many years. But one look was enough to make him realize that he loved her, and one look was enough to tell Maru too that she had found the right man. Just as the wedding guests had assembled outside the church Tefau and Maru disappeared. A search was instituted at once, headed by the bridegroom, but the runaways had disappeared and not a trace of them could be found.

Only when the last wedding guest had left, and the anger of the parents and the ex-bridegroom had subsided, did Tefau and Maru return from their hiding-place on one of the small islands on the other side of the lagoon. This happened more than five years ago, and they are still living together and look just as happy as if they had run away yesterday.

In contrast to what we are accustomed to, a marriage on Raroia - irrespective of how long it lasts and how often the parties change - hardly means any increase in responsibility or more work. Rather the contrary.

In the first place, the newly married couple receive a piece of land as a gift from their parents and so become at last quite independent of them. Further, they immediately adopt one or a couple of children, who take charge of the housekeeping and do all the work of a servant - for no wages. Thus the most important problems are solved. As time passes and the children (adopted and their own) grow up, the parents’ existence becomes more and more pleasant, and as soon as the children have got into their teens they can even hand over most of the tedious copra-making to them.

The women in particular have an astonishingly free and idle existence.

As long as there is a child in the neighbourhood a married woman does as little as possible in her home, and as the land she has got from her parents is her private property, she is seldom economically dependent on her husband. Her most important occupation, in fact, is gossiping with women friends and making new clothes. There is a sewing-machine in every home, and a self-respecting woman makes a couple of new dresses every time a schooner comes with cloth, i.e. at least once a month.

How a family spends its time is shown in detail on the accompanying chart, based on observations of a 'normal family' during one week. The youngsters clearly take the brunt of the work.

CHART SHOWING HOW A RAROIAN FAMILY SPENDS ITS TIME

MEMBERS OF FAMILY	MONDAY a m	MONDAY p m	TUESDAY a m	TUESDAY p m	WEDNESDAY a m	WEDNESDAY p m	THURSDAY a m	THURSDAY p m	FRIDAY a m	FRIDAY p m	SATURDAY a m	SATURDAY p m	SUNDAY a m	SUNDAY p m
TAFAFUA 38, husband	Made copra	Rested	Talked to friends	Fished	Rested	Talked to friends	Read Bible	Talked to friends	Made copra	Rested	Rested	Talked to friends	Church	Talked to friends
TEIGU 36, wife	House-hold work	Talked to friends	Rested	House-hold work	Looked after children	Rested	Made clothes	Talked to friends	House-hold work	Rested	Made clothes	Talked to friends	Church	Read Bible
TEAU 19, son	Rested	Talked to friends	Made copra	Rested	Made copra	Fished	Fished	Talked to friends	Made copra	Played foot-ball	Fetched wood	Singing	Church	Music and Singing
TEFAVA 16, son	Rested	House-hold work	Made copra	Rested	Fished	Fetched wood	Made copra	House-hold work	Made copra	Played foot-ball	House-hold work	Singing	Church	Music and Singing
TEUTUHO 14, daughter	House-hold work	House-hold work	House-hold work	Talked to friends	House-hold work	Rested	House-hold work	House-hold work	Talked to friends	House-hold work	House-hold work	Singing	Church	Music and Singing
RAKU 10, daughter	Looked after children	Talked to friends	House-hold work	House-hold work	Played	House-hold work	House-hold work	Talked to friends	Rested	House-hold work	Played	House-hold work	Church	Music and Singing
3 girls aged 3-6	Played	Fetched water	Played	Played	Fetched water	Played	Played	Ran errands	Fetched water	Played	Played	Played	Church	Played

Week after week, month after month, year after year, the Raroians' life flows on in this idyllic manner. The interruptions are few and insignificant. Going to church of course means some change - especially as it serves as a pretext for brilliant fashion parades - but the schooners' visits are even more highly appreciated. As a rule one schooner a month comes to Raroia, and her arrival is always greeted with loud shouts and great joy.

The schooners seldom stay more than one day, but that is at any rate enough for the Raroians to be able to buy a piece of cloth or a few bottles of rum and hear the latest gossip from Tahiti. A wedding, or a visit from relations from some other island, is also a possible interruption, but young people of a marriageable age are sadly few, and the relations live the same simple life as the Raroians themselves and so rarely have any particularly interesting news to tell. It is not surprising, therefore, that some grow tired of their monotonous life and, at least for a time, seek adventures elsewhere.

The women usually go to Papeete. The men, on the contrary, have several possibilities to choose from. They can either ship on board a schooner, try to find work in Tahiti, or become divers on one of the pearl or mother-of-pearl islands. Most of them have no definite plans, but go off to see what will turn up. Tehei's case is typical. He related his adventures to us as follows;

"One day a big yacht came to Raroia. A tall stout *popaa*, who smoked cigars and drank strong spirits, was obviously the chief. Everything on board was clean and scrubbed; she was the finest boat I've ever seen. None of the strangers talked any language I understood, but I think they were Americans. The yacht stayed a week and I was pilot to the fat man all the time. He often gave me queer things to eat which I had never seen before, and he seemed a good sort.

"When the yacht was going to leave Raroia I took my pandanus mat and went on board and showed by signs that I wanted to go too. They all laughed and nodded, and soon we wore out at sea. I tried to ask where we were going, but no one understood me. We cruised round for a long time among the Tuamotu islands, but at Takaroa two more men came on board and were also allowed to stay.

"We went on to the Marquesas islands and visited nearly all the other islands in French Oceania. At last we came to Papeete and there the fat man told me by signs that I was to go ashore. I wanted to go still farther with them to see the whole world, but he would not agree to that. When I tried to hide below, they threw me into the sea. All the Papeete people laughed at me when they saw me floating in the harbour with my pandanus mat.

"At last I swam in to the quay and lay down to dry myself in the sun. It was the first time I had been in Papeete, and for several weeks I went round the bars all day and went to the cinema every evening. I slept in the streets at night, for I had no relations in Papeete to stay with. At last I had no money left, and then I went down to the harbour to see if there wasn't some boat which wanted a man.

"Another American yacht had just come in and on board her was

another fat *popaa*, who also smoked cigars and drank strong spirits. He had an interpreter who talked Tahitian. The interpreter explained that the fat man would give me 6,000 francs ($96) a month to have photographs taken of me. Of course I was pleased and said that he could take as many photographs as he liked for 6,000 francs.

"I went on board the yacht to one of the Paumotu islands which is called Marokau, and there the fat *popaa* began to put his apparatus and machines in order. Then he told me to climb up the mast and jump into the sea. I thought this was a funny way of taking photographs, for in Papeete you always sit still on a chair when a photographer is taking you, but anyhow I did as he told me.

" 'Good,' said the *popaa* when that was finished. 'Now get hold of a shark and fight with it.'

"I told him it was dangerous to fight with sharks and that I didn't want to lose my arms and legs. He thought for a minute or two and then he said:

" 'If we haul up a shark and tie up its mouth with a fishing line, will you fight with it then?'

"There shouldn't be any danger in that, I thought, so we hauled up a big fellow and sewed up his mouth. Then I jumped in with the shark and the *popaa* began to take photographs. But there were a lot of sharks in the sea, and in a little while I didn't know which was the right one. I didn't want to seem afraid, so I went on. The *popaa* was pleased and said the photographs were good.

."We stayed on Marokau two months, and I swam through the breakers, climbed up the palms, dived for giant mussels, and did a lot of other dangerous things. Sometimes I had to dress up and act with other *popaa* who were dressed up too, and once they bound me hand and foot and threw me into the sea. They only just saved me before I was full of water.

"At last the fat man had taken all the photographs he wanted, and then we went back to Papeete. There was no one else who would pay me for being photographed, so I began to work in the harbour. After a month I couldn't stand it any longer, and as I had no more money and couldn't get any other work, I came home to Raroia."

Most of the men, like Tehei, return to Raroia sooner or later. When their eagerness for adventure has subsided, they find that the world is considerably harder and more ruthless than they had imagined, and at last they slowly begin to realize how happy life on their island really is. Taught by experience, they prefer in future to stay in the only place where they have land and incomes and are their own masters. The city, of course, continues to attract them, but they content themselves with a visit now and then when they are flush with money and no longer dream of settling

down and finding work there. They have become good local patriots who - certainly quite rightly - have become convinced that there is no better place on earth than Raroia.

It is rather different with the women who seek adventures in Papeete. As long as they are young and attractive they can always find someone to keep them, or they can become prostitutes. This is an idle and, in the opinion of most, pleasant existence, and so they find no reason to go back to Raroia, where life is duller and more monotonous. When they grow older they certainly find it harder to get along, but most often they are ashamed to return, or else they have been so fascinated by town life that they cannot tear themselves away, so they prefer to stay and take a badly paid job. The result has been the present unfortunate disproportion between men and women on Raroia.

After the Raroians have come safely through the last ‘Papeete crisis' and settled down for good on their island, there is scarcely anything to add. Days and years pass, rain and sunshine follow each other, the coconuts ripen and fall to the ground, but the people, wise with age and experience, continue to live their quiet, secure life. They make a little copra now and then, fish in the lagoon, and talk, sing, and dance for the rest of the time. Without themselves noticing it or thinking about it, nevertheless they slowly grow old, and suddenly one day they find their relations beginning to talk about their infirmities and approaching death. There is no pretence even on these subjects, but all are as naively candid and realistic as ever.

We found this out for the first time one day when Maiata, a wrinkled little old woman, believed to be the oldest on Raroia, asked us to come and see her daughter Tehina, who had toothache. The case proved to be hopeless, as nearly all Tehina's teeth were broken and black, and we therefore advised her to go to Papeete and have them all taken out by a dentist and a false set put in instead. Tehina considered our proposal for a long time, and then said:

"That’s a good idea all right, but I won’t go now, for my mamma is old, and may die while I’m away, and then who will take care of the children?"

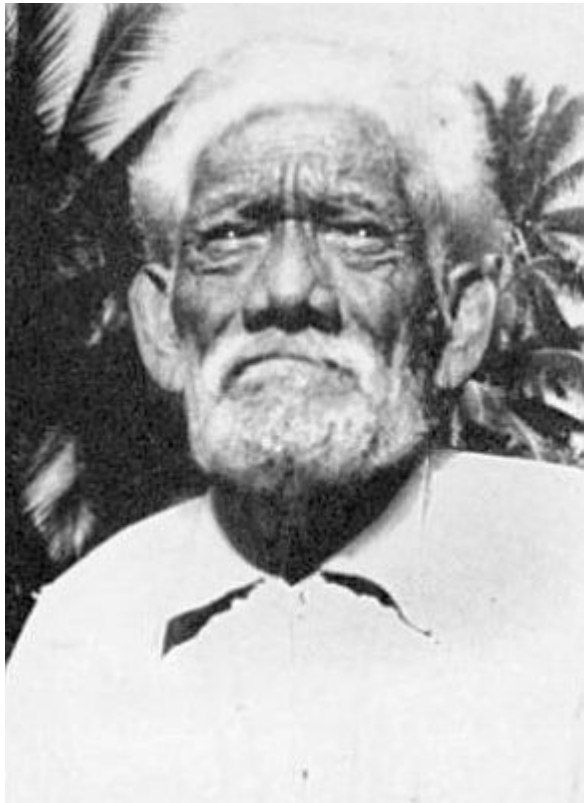
"I shan’t die now," the old woman, who stood close by, protested. "You go."

"You’ve been coughing a lot lately," Tehina said emphatically, "and that’s always a bad sign."

After a thorough and realistic discussion of the old woman’s health and expectation of life, the two at last agreed that Tehina should go.

Their calculations had been right, and three or four months passed before Maiata at last fell asleep quietly and peacefully. Tehina and her

relations wept bitterly for a day and a night and the village rang with lamentation. But the day after the funeral all were laughing and singing again. We thought for a long time that this behaviour was a little unusual and abnormal, but several other deaths which have occurred since then have taught us that the Raroians do in fact leave life in the same simple and inconspicuous manner in which they begin it.



Old Te Iho, the last sage on the island. With his light complexion and snow white hair and beard, he could easily play Santa Claus in any American home.

Soon after Te Iho's story of the old times, I went down to the landing place on the bay and sat upon the chief's seat at the stone-built *marae*, or cult site.

The girls often work more than the women. The young girl astride the stool (*above*) is grating coconut on the crescent-shaped piece of iron, while one of the cats helps himself to a free lunch. Two younger girls (*below, left*) are fetching water, and an older girl (*below, right*) is doing the family wash.

In spite of all the manufactured goods available to the Raroians, they still use the palm leaf for a variety of purposes, and all the women are able to braid a leaf mat in a few minutes.

Marie-Thérèse, in native costume, splits a palm leaf, as she prepares to plait a palm-leaf mat.

Polynesian women have a reputation for attractiveness, and many are astonishingly comely. None consider themselves well-dressed without a *tiare* bloom behind the ear.

Back to the old times when weapons were made of wood - a spear sharpened at both ends and a heavy club!

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Governor's Visit

Temake's fine wireless - Dissatisfaction with the music programme - American school saves the situation -Surprising news - Governor to pay a visit - Smartening up the village Wheelbarrow race - Shadow dancing - A new song - Highflown speech of welcome - The governor's presents - Shell collecting - Tauroa's house in the way - We practise the reception - Government vessel sighted at last - National games - Obstacle race - Polynesian spear-throwing - Taupua invincible in sack race - Weekly papers make a hit - Our prizes

THE merchant Temake had wanted a wireless set for a long time. If it had been only a question of money, of course, he could have obtained several dozen sets, but unfortunately it was not so simple as that, and the difficulties which had done most to prevent the realization of his dream were of quite another kind.

In the first place, he did not know how to manage wireless apparatus; in the second, he had no idea how he should set about getting one. We assured him that it was no more difficult to start a wireless set than to turn a door-key, which gave him fresh hope, though he did confess that it was not always so easy to lock or unlock a door, and that he often ruined his keys by turning them the wrong way. We therefore added, to make things quite safe, that there were marks on wireless sets showing which way the knobs should be turned, which really seemed to reassure him.

The only remaining question, therefore, was where he would find a set. On his visits to Papeete he had several times tried to get one, but unfortunately they had always been sold out. We therefore offered to write direct to an importer and ask him to order a wireless in France. This proposal was immediately hailed with great enthusiasm by Temake and the population as a whole.

Several months of impatient waiting followed, but at last one day news came from Papeete that the wireless had arrived. The cost, including customs duty, carriage, and the importer's commission, would be 15,000 Tahiti francs, or $240. We were amazed at the price, but Temake declared that it was a trifle and that he would gladly pay double if necessary. We therefore hastened to write to the importer telling him to send the wireless

out to Raroia as quickly as possible, to prevent Temake from increasing the price himself from sheer enthusiasm. The wireless had two batteries. To charge them Temake naturally needed a motor. We had already explained this to him and pointed out that Tutepo's fine motor would now be of some use, but Temake had got it into his head that he would have his own motor and ordered one from Papeete by return of post - of course twice as large as was necessary. It cost as much as the wireless; this Temake thought was splendid.

During the weeks that followed the whole population made a morning and evening pilgrimage to the look-out point on the west side of the island, chattering eagerly about the expected joys, and when at last one day the *Florence's* battered sails appeared above the horizon, all broke out into such vehement cheering that Marie-Thérèse and I almost thought they had suddenly returned to the savage customs of their ancestors and were about to hold a cannibal feast.

The whole crowd came rushing at a furious gallop to the village, where Marie-Thérèse and I were just eating our breakfast in solitude. First came some of the boys and the young men, then some of the girls and the older men, followed by a long trail of old men and old women with Matapu, aged seventy-five, bringing up the rear. They all bounded and scuttled along between branches of trees and heaps of copra with astonishing lightness and activity, and several of the oldest and feeblest dogs positively found it hard to keep up with them. When they had all in turn imparted to us the sensational news that the *Florence* and the wireless had at last come they all rushed back to the look-out point to convince themselves that they had not seen a vision.

As soon as the schooner had cast anchor in the lagoon off the village Temake hurried on board to fetch his treasures. He clasped the wireless set with emotion and carried it ashore, while Tufaka took charge of the batteries. Tehei seized the motor and some of the children collected the small parcels. The procession disappeared slowly and ceremoniously into Temake's house amid prolonged cheering from the populace.

"Please start the wireless," Temake said to me, as soon as he had set down his precious burden.

I explained that it was best to put up an aerial and ground it first, and that the batteries would certainly be none the worse for being charged. The Raroians remembered that the *Kon-Tiki* expedition had put up an aerial in one of the tallest palms and decided at once to beat the *Kon-Tiki* aerial. They attacked their task so energetically that I did not succeed in checking them until they had spliced together a hundred yards of wire, felled three palms and put up sticks in most of the tree-tops round Temake's house. Meanwhile the captain of the schooner and I charged the

batteries.

About seven o'clock in the evening all was ready for the first entertainment programme, I tuned in to Papeete and asked Temake to turn on the instrument. Amid a reverent silence he took hold of the knob, which almost disappeared in his giant paw, and turned it half-way round to the right. This was evidently the right way, for a faint buzzing was heard, after which the thing began to crackle like a machine-gun. Then suddenly a voice came through. It was the Tahitian announcer at the Papeete wireless station. The station was extremely weak and there were continual disturbances, but that made no difference to our friends. They listened to the programme, which consisted of Tahitian news and local music, with an expression of beatitude on their faces, and declared that it was superlatively good. Unfortunately the programme lasted only for an hour. There were, however, masses of American stations to choose from; I soon found one with languishing music, which was heard ten times as well and as clearly as the Papeete station, and retired to let Temake enjoy his triumph alone.

But in a little while he came and knocked at our door. He looked worried.

"Can you come and change the music?" he asked. "It isn't good."

I had just heard the announcer say that the piece the orchestra was just playing was the vastly popular song 'I Want, but you Don't' - or something like that - which everyone was completely mad about, and explained this to Temake. He assured me that, however many people might be mad about this song, the Raroians at any rate did not like it. They were tired of all kinds of modern dance music, he added.

I tried symphonies, violin music, piano, operas, and yodelling. The yodelling went down well, but everything else the Raroians rejected with unmistakable signs of disapproval. Unfortunately there were not many stations with yodelling on their programmes, and the Raroians' spirits were at zero when the party broke up.

Our attempts to entertain the Raroians with the gramophone had taught us long before that the only kind of music they really appreciated were Hawaiian music and cowboy songs, and next day I made vigorous efforts to find some station which was sending out programmes of this kind. Now and then, of course, I found some tunes which the listeners liked, but at least three-quarters of all the programmes consisted of dance music, advertisements, news, and plays. This was a drawback to which unfortunately, I had never given much thought, and Temake, who had always been convinced that it would be as easy to find Hawaiian music and cowboy songs as to put on a gramophone record, was of course bitterly disappointed.

The days passed, but the results of my exertions remained as meagre as ever, and I began to feel that the whole of my prestige was at stake. Temake had already begun to talk of getting another wireless with better music when by chance I found in an American magazine an advertisement of a wireless station which seemed to have specialized in cowboy songs. This was clearly salvation!

The same evening I tried to get it on the short wavelength, and to my inexpressible joy and relief ‘Give Me Back My Boots and Saddle' immediately flowed from the apparatus. I waited eagerly for the next number. That was a cowboy song too. And the next, and the next. An hour passed. Still nothing but cowboy songs. The spectators’ delight was enormous, and Temake at last began to feel that he owned a wireless.

But the station had one drawback. It was rented by a correspondence school which wanted to advertise its programme of courses, and in between the cowboy songs a loud enthusiastic voice tallied for a few minutes of the advantages of studying at the 'Never-Too-Late School’. The gist of the commercial was always the same and ran more or less like this:

> ‘Have you got a high school education? Have *you* got a high school education? If not, remember that the Never-Too-Late School offers you the best, quickest, and cheapest courses. Five dollars cash, the rest in installments. You can study when you like, where you like, and how you like. Do you want to get on in life? - and you sure do - do you want to earn more money? - and who doesn't? - remember that the best way is to get a certificate. Get your high school diploma at the Never-Too-Late School! Do you want to make a dream reality? Get your high school diploma! Do you want a better job? Get your high school diploma! Do you want a higher salary? Get your high school diploma! Do you want to take part in building the world of tomorrow? Get your high school diploma! The Never-Too-Late School is for you, whoever you are, wherever you are. Five dollars cash, the rest in installments. You can study when you like, where you like, and how you like. Write to the Never-Too-Late School - RIGHT NOW!’

When Temake had explained to the audience that the announcer was a real cowboy telling of his latest exploits, the Raroians accepted the interruptions with equanimity, and, their mouths half open and eyes closed, listened to the brisk cheerful voice with the same interest and enthusiasm as the songs.

Time passed, and the Raroians continued to assemble round the wireless as faithfully as ever. Marie-Thérèse and I, it will easily be understood, soon grew tired of these Wild West programmes, and decided to have a rest from all wireless programmes for a time. Most of our friends, however, thought we ought to follow better what was happening in the world around us, so they came from time to time and told us the most important news. Most of them, as usual, had difficulty in seeing

events in their right perspective. Tapakia's case is very typical of the Raroians' way of judging the importance and value of news. As usual it was a little difficult for them to evaluate news in the proper perspective. For instance one evening Tapakia came rushing in with every sign of agitation and cried:

"Have you heard, have you heard what's happened on Pukapuka? [another island in the Tuamotu group about 130 miles east of Raroia]. The school-teacher's been murdered! Her husband did it. When he came home from fishing, she was with another man, and he was so angry that he stuck his harpoon into her. He stuck it into her three times, and she died soon afterwards."

"That was awful," we both said, sincerely meaning it.

"Yes, isn't it?" Tapakia went on. "He ought to have hit her with his fists or a log of wood instead. That's what we do on Raroia. But on some of the eastern islands they often use harpoons to fight with. That's bad."

We discussed the incident long and thoroughly. At last there was nothing more to be added, so we asked Tapakia if he had no other interesting news to tell us.

"Let me see," he said; "yes, two schooners are coming to Raroia in a week. In Tahiti they're going to have a ball with two bands, and a great war has begun in Europe."

"What?" I cried, catching hold of him in astonishment and alarm. "What did you say? Who has started a war?"

"Let me see," said Tapakia, scratching his head, "either it was Germany and Russia against America and some other countries, or else it was Russia and America against Germany and England and maybe some other countries. I don't remember exactly. But anyhow it's a big war."

We did not need to listen long to the news next evening to find that Tapakia's version of events in Europe was misleading, to say the least of it. But we did not dare interrupt him to give him a correct account of what had happened. He was in the middle of an animated discussion with Temake about the murder on Pukapuka and the ball at Papeete.

For a long time all was quiet, but then the Chief Teka came one day quite unexpectedly and informed us that the governor was coming to the Tuamotu islands on a tour of inspection. This was truly great news, for Raroia had not been honoured with a visit from a governor since 1910! The Raroians, who consider even the *mutoi*, or policeman, a person of high standing, were almost panic stricken at this announcement, and some of the most inventive immediately proposed that the whole population should hide on the islands on the other side of the lagoon.

Teka, however, showed himself equal to the situation and made a shrewd appeal to their local patriotism. He immediately got up and made a

long speech in which he pointed out that the Raroians, instead of going and hiding, ought to take the opportunity to distinguish themselves. On most of the islands in the Tuamotu group, he pointed out, there was no wireless, and there would therefore be no expectation of, and no preparations for, the governor's visit. On Raroia, thanks to Temake's wireless, everyone was now warned, and it would be possible to give the governor a reception such as he had never experienced. Thus the Raroians would gain not only his favour, but prestige and honour among all the Tuamotu islanders.

The result was naturally as intended. All were filled with enthusiasm and forgot their fear of the person of high rank. At the public meeting which was held on the following day several brilliant proposals were put forward as to the manner of his reception. Taipuhia, for example, wanted to decorate the whole 'main street' with triumphal arches of roses, while Maono eagerly advocated a gigantic firework display. As there were neither roses nor pyrotechic pieces on the island, and there was no time or possibility to send for any (details which Taipuhia and Maono willingly agreed that they had forgotten in their zeal), the islanders unanimously accepted Tekura's proposal to dean up the village, paint the flagstaff, and organize a feast with genuine Polynesian songs and dances.

The village had obviously not been thoroughly cleaned up since the last time a governor had visited it, but the whole population flung itself into the task with such energy that only a few days later all the 'streets' were cleaned of weeds, all hedges clipped, and all tumble-down houses propped up. Taupua undoubtedly showed the greatest zeal, for she pulled up not only the weeds but all the flowers and other plants which grew in her garden, so that it finally resembled a newly ploughed field more than anything.

"But why are you pulling up all the flowers?" we asked her while she was devastating the garden.

"Oh," she said, "simple flowers like these will certainly seem no better than weeds to the governor."

So saying, she seized the next clump with concentrated energy and pulled it up by the roots.

When the Raroians had finished cleaning up the village a huge mountain of empty bottles bore witness to their diligence and their monumental thirst. Rehua, who was almost as much interested in empty bottles as in full ones and has the prettiest 'beer bed' on the island, proposed that they should be planted along the 'main street' of the village as a kind of triumphal avenue for the governor, but fortunately we succeeded in preventing his plans from being carried out.

Teka, on the other hand, pointed out quite rightly that the quay was in

a lamentable state and that the governor's first impression would therefore be very bad, which could have most unfortunate consequences. To repair the quay was, however, a big job, especially as the necessary sand and coral had to be fetched from the outskirts of the village - and the Raroians had no desire to undertake such severe exertions, even for the governor's sake.

Teka now gave proof once more of his superior knowledge of humanity by immediately announcing a labour competition. He divided the population into several groups, each of which fetched a hand-cart. Then he drew up all the carts in a line and declared that the team which was the first to load its cart and push it to the quay should get hedf a dozen bottles of beer.

This was a method of work which the Raroians understood. For two whole days the village rang with laughter and shrieking from morning to late in the evening, and the quay grew rapidly in both breadth and length. Certainly it was more tiring to work in this manner, and certainly several of the carts were smashed, but what did that matter? It was jolly work anyhow, and that was the most important thing. Anyone who thinks that the Polynesians' idleness is unconquerable would have profited by this display of energy. During the two days for which the work lasted the Raroians only knocked off for half an hour at dinner-time, when the sun was at its highest, and that was not to eat but to divert themselves with a short game of football!

Not till the quay was at last finished did they begin to rehearse the songs and dances which were to form part of the programme of the feast. As there were no good leaders among the young people Te Iho was fetched, and for a time he seemed to liven up again and once more became young and energetic. I remember particularly clearly the first evening when, along with all the Raroians who could walk or crawl, we went out to a glade outside the village to see the rehearsals.

Every spectator had with him a lamp or torch and they at once formed a wide ring of light within which the participants took their stand. The 'band' took its place under a palm close by. It consisted of five men with drums made from old galvanized iron pots. Te Iho first showed how the dances should be done, and then, in time to the sound of the drums, the little troupe of men and women began to move backward and forward on the dance floor of coral sand.

As the hours passed Te Iho became more and more inspired and the dancing livelier and wilder. The shadows leapt and danced among the palm-trunks in the flickering, shifting light as though they had been ghosts and spirits from a past age, wakened to life by the primitive exciting music, while the breakers rumbled dully in the background. We could not

help being affected by the strange atmosphere and felt ourselves suddenly carried hundreds of years back in time.

During the first evening practices no fine dresses had yet been made for the participators, but soon more and more of the men and women began to appear in loin-cloths and crowns of plaited pandanus leaves. When finally all the performers looked as heathenish as their ancestors, the band at last found that the galvanized iron pots were a trifle unsuitable and replaced them with real wooden drums, which a couple of the men manufactured by hollowing out a few branches of hard *tou* wood.

When the dancers collapsed exhausted and the drummers could no longer move a finger, there was an interval in which they rehearsed their songs. In addition to the old well-known songs and ballads, they decided one evening to make up a new song, as is usual on all important occasions. First they agreed on an old and well-known tune, and then one of the men was chosen by vote to compose the words. In real Polynesian style he did not use pen and paper, but instead spoke the verses aloud as he composed them, and those who sat round repeated them quietly to themselves. Every verse ended with the words ‘it takes a long time for the governor to come to Raroia, he’s been on his way for forty years'. When the song was finished (in about an hour) one of the girls immediately got up and sang it from beginning to end without a mistake. When it was next rehearsed, everyone knew it.

We begged Te Iho, half in fun and half in earnest, to invent a new dance. He did not hesitate for a moment, but asked at once what kind of dance we wanted. He had on several occasions shown us how fire is made by rubbing in the Polynesian way, and we had found his movements surprisingly harmonious and rhythmical. We therefore asked him if he could not do a 'fire-making dance’. An hour later he had invented a new dance, so fascinating and suggestive that even a spectator of moderate depth of understanding could have read in it a whole symbolic drama of man's eternal striving for clarity and light.

After a fortnight of hard work and diligent practice everything was ready - with one important exception. The men had not yet been able to agree as to who was to deliver the speech of welcome to the governor. But when the wireless announced one evening that the governor had left Papeete, they hastened to find a solution of the problem and decided in true Solomonic style that Taipuhia should deliver the speech, as he was the only man who at the moment was neither hoarse nor suffering from a cold.

Taipuhia took the task seriously, for he shut himself into a palm-leaf house (specially built for the purpose) with a copy-book and a pen borrowed from the schoolmistress, and did not come out till he had written

a speech which extended from one cover to the other. That it might be really perfect, he came to see me and wondered whether I could not type it for him. When at last the masterpiece was finished, it occupied eight closely typed pages, although I had omitted some of Taipuhia's wildest extravagances of style. He looked as radiantly happy as an author who sees the result of his efforts in print for the first time.

Next day, however, he stood in the doorway again, twisting his hat in slight embarrassment.

"What is it now?" I sighed. "Have you written a new speech?"

"No, not really," he replied, "but I'd like you to write the old speech again."

He fished up a dirty ball of paper from one of his trouser pockets.

"See, I lent people the speech, and when I got it back it looked like this."

I retyped it from beginning to end and for safety's sake made a copy for the Raroians' use.

The same evening on which the new version of Taipuhia's speech began to circulate a fresh council was held to discuss what else ought to be done. All agreed that the most important thing which remained was to find some presents for the governor, and finally Manumea and Rehua were commissioned to make a stick and a coconut fibre crown, the old symbols of chieftaincy in the Tuamotu group.

We knew that both Manumea and Regua were skilled wood-carvers, but the stick they showed us a few days later really exceeded all our expectations. It was carved from the finest *tamanu*, a kind of wood which is correctly called Tahiti mahogany, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl with a golden shimmer (a rare variety). The shape was simple and dignified and the stick ended at the top in a graceful handle formed like a tortoise, the Tuamotuans' sacred animal in the old heathen times. It was indeed a masterpiece!

The coconut fibre crown was also a work of art, but it had one serious defect. It was so large that it would quite certainly fall down on to the governor's nose. Rehua had the bright idea of threading a string through it, and declared that he would take the measure of the governor's head with his eyes as soon as he stepped ashore and pull the string of the crown till it was the right size. We found this a slightly risky solution of the problem, but the Raroians showed no misgiving, so evidently there was nothing to be done about it.

The stick and the crown were substantially a gift from the men. The women did not want to do worse, so they divided themselves into working parties and began to plait a pandanus mat.

An ordinary pandanus mat is about 6 by 6 ft in size, but before we

could wink an eyelid the governor's mat was at least 15 by 30 ft. As we quickly discovered, its gigantic dimensions were due not only to the women's desire to beat all other pandanus mats which the governor could imaginably receive, but also to practical considerations. On Maihotu's proposal it had been decided to plait a text into the mat with the aid of red ribbons - and this text consisted of a whole verse of the Bible in letters three feet high!

While all this was going on, Tepava and Teka listened regularly to the wireless, which had some news about the governor's tour of inspection almost every day. Among other things they heard that the governor's wife was also on board the Government yacht. It would, of course, be impolite to forget her when the presents were being made, so the Raroians at once began to worry their heads to find something suitable for her. At last we remembered that she collected shells. That was the solution. There were masses of shells on the beaches, and it would take no time to make a nice collection, if everyone helped. However, our friends were dubious.

"Pooh, ordinary shells aren't a thing to give to the governor's wife," one said.

"If at least we could gild them," said another.

"What does she want the shells for?" said a third. "Does she eat them?"

"She'll laugh at us," said a fourth, "Let's try to embroider a tablecloth instead."

We stood our ground and explained that she had many shells from other places but none so far from the Tuamotu islands, and would be glad to get as many new ones as possible. No one seemed really convinced by our arguments, but they all frankly admitted that we ought to understand affairs better than they, as we ourselves were *popaa*, and at last promised to collect shells. Next morning a heap of shells began to form on our veranda. There were small shells and large shells, round shells and twisted shells, white shells and coloured shells, but all had one thing in common - they were unusually pretty and bright. The situation was saved.

On the afternoon of the same day Teka made a tour of inspection through the village. Everything seemed to be in perfect order. The streets of the village were freshly sanded and raked, there were gay flower-beds here and there among the palms, and many of the houses were newly painted. The village indeed looked really smart. But suddenly Teka stopped. Tauroa had obviously done nothing to his tumble-down shanty of rusty galvanized iron and wooden boxes, which was all the more inexcusable in that it was conspicuously placed opposite the village assembly house.

The chief summoned Tauroa, who declared that he had indeed meant

to paint the house, but that it had not been done simply because he had no paint. When Teka pressed him a little, he admitted that he ought to have asked someone to lend him some paint, but added, probably with truth, that he had not thought of this until it was too late. Teka ordered a search to be made in the village, but unfortunately there was not enough paint left even to paint Tauroa red, which Tunui proposed as a suitable punishment.

At last Tauroa hit upon what seemed to him an excellent solution of the problem. He maintained that it did not matter so much if the house was tumble-down and a trifle paintless, for he would seat himself at the door and entertain the governor in such a fascinating manner that the latter would not notice what the house looked like.

No one, however, had any great confidence in Tauroa's charm, and so the inhabitants decided at once to do the only possible thing - to move the house. There was no time to be lost, and the men fetched wooden rollers, which they pushed under the house. The whole population helped, and despite Tauroa's vigorous protests the house soon disappeared into a clump of trees a few hundred yards away. Tauroa stood in the doorway till the last moment, attempting with eloquent pantomime to show how urbanely he would receive the governor, if only the house might stay where it was.

Several days passed. Early each morning Teka sent a party of boys over to the west side of the island to keep a look-out for the Government vessel, and ordered them to climb up into the palmtops that they might see her as soon as possible. They stayed there as a rule till late at night, when fear of the dark at last drove them home. He himself constantly inspected the village and assembled the population daily to practise the reception ceremony down on the quay.

To make as effective an impression as possible we had decided that I was to put on a gramophone record of the *'Marseillaise'* at the moment when Teka said in a loud voice "Welcome to Raroia, Your Excellency!" Immediately afterwards the population would join in the song. Not till the national song was over did the turn of Taipuhia, the singers, and all the rest come.

All the rehearsals went splendidly. Old and young knew their parts by heart, Teka bellowed "Welcome, Your Excellency!" like the fiercest drill sergeant and the whole crowd sang the *'Marseillaise'* with spirit and gusto, although of course none of them knew the words.

We had just finished rehearsing the ceremony for the fifth or sixth time when one of the scouts came running and breathlessly announced that a ship was in sight on the horizon to northward. We all hurried over to the look-out point. The sails grew in size quickly, and there was no doubt that it was the Government schooner. When the gleaming white ship dropped

anchor in the lagoon half an hour later we were again drawn up on the quay, confident and expectant.

But one thing struck me at once. All was so curiously silent and still on board the Government vessel. No gold-laced personages were to be seen and no orders were heard. We all soon felt that something was wrong and began to be uneasy and nervous. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour passed without anything happening. At last a rowing boat cast off from the ship and slowly approached the quay. In the stern sat a subordinate official with a portfolio on his knees. *He was alone!* Not even the administrator of the Tuamotus had come.

"What shall we do now?" said Taipuhia in despair, fingering his fine typewritten speech.

"The only thing we can do is to carry out the entire reception programme," Teka replied. "It's too late to draw back."

So as soon as the rowing boat scraped against the quay I set the *'Marseillaise'* going and Teka drew himself up and bellowed: "Welcome, Your Excellency!"

The official was so astonished at this unexpected reception that he could not utter a word, but the many verses of the *'Marseillaise'* gave him time to pull himself together, and the last notes scarcely died away when he raised his voice and said: "But what on earth are you doing?"

"Doing?" replied Teka. "We're waiting for the governor. Isn't he on board?"

"No," said the official. "He's on board a destroyer. What made you suppose he was coming?"

"Temake's fine new wireless said he was," Teka answered, and for the first time he sounded a little uneasy.

"It was said that he was coming to the Tuamotu group on a tour of inspection. That is correct. But the Tuamotu group is large. There are seventy-eight islands and he cannot visit them all. For that matter he has already visited as many islands as he can, and he is on his way back to Papeete now."

The official looked round, shook his head and added:

"Hurry up and get out your reports and books, for we must go on to Takume at once."

Poor Teka! He had never imagined that the governor could make a tour of inspection among the Tuamotu islands without visiting Raroia. Poor Raroians! They, too, had assumed that Raroia and Tuamotu meant the same thing, although the announcer had not positively said so. Poor boys and girls who had practised songs and dances all for nothing! Poor children who had expected to be present at real festivities!

Marie-Thésère and I felt very sorry for our friends and realized that

something must be done. But what? Suddenly I had an idea. I called to Teka:

"Sound the village drum. We'll arange national games."

"National games - what's that?" asked Teka in astonishment.

"You'll see. Collect the people."

The natives immediately greeted our proposal with visible and audible delight, and after eager discussion and demonstration we finally agreed to hold a popular festival, the main features of which would be tossing the caber, throwing the discus, and folk dances. As finale a real Polynesian dinner would be served. There was no time to lose, and while the Raroians ran home and kicked off their shoes and got out of their Sunday clothes, Marie-Thérèse and I began to measure out the ground for the competitions on the open space in front of the assembly house.

To find logs for tossing the caber the men felled a few young palms and cut them into pieces about fifteen feet long, and so heavy that I could only just lift them. But amid cheers and cries of *ke-ke-ke-ke-te-hu-ru-hu-ru* the strong men of Raroia tossed them a good thirty feet. When Taipuhia had shown his superiority three times running we went on to throwing the discus, which was open to all comers.

We had difficulty in finding good stones for throwing, and it was not till Hamani found that mother-of-pearl mussels were admirably suited to the purpose that the game really got going. For a good hour the mussels flew through the air like shining projectiles, in which the sun was mirrored and refracted in all the colours of the rainbow. It was rather hard to decide who were the winners in the different groups, as they all cheated as soon as our backs were turned, but we finally managed to pick out three boys, two women, and one old man for a final, which one of the women won with surprising fairness.

Then we went on to the folk dances. For these - comprehensibly enough - the Raroians immediately composed new words, which were about as much like the original as a soldiers' song is like a nursery rhyme!

As the general excitement had reached undreamed-of heights, and nobody wanted to stop, we thought we had better think of some new items for the programme and proposed an obstacle race. Of course, all were filled with enthusiasm, and in no time an obstacle course of boxes, school benches, and furniture, which will certainly long be remembered in Raroia's history, was made round the assembly house. The most difficult obstacle was Ruto's carpenter's shop, which we had turned upside down and filled with old chairs. It was certainly no child's play to clear it, and one or two of the stoutest women got so hopelessly involved that they did not succeed in getting out till the race was over.

After we had all had a little rest Tehei came up and wondered if it

would not be suitable to have a genuine Polynesian competition. Naturally we all thought this a good idea. To our great delight the men at last decided to arrange a spear-throwing competition, an old Polynesian sport about which we had heard a great deal.

While the other men were fetching their fishing spears Tehei set up a coconut on a stake about twice his own height. Then he stepped out twenty-five yards and drew a line on the ground. The competitors had now begun to assemble. Each of them had ten thin supple spears with iron points, every spear marked with its owner's name. Tehei announced that the competitors could throw their spears when they liked and in what order they liked. The man who got most hits was, of course, the winner.

The participators crouched down with every muscle taut, holding their spears at the ready. Then Tehei gave a sign and the spears began to whistle through the air. All the competitors held the spear by the butt and aimed with the point, and all showed an equally astonishing sureness of aim. When the competition was over seventeen quivering spears were fixed in the coconut, and at least as many had struck it, but had broken loose and fallen to the ground. The fifteen participators had used 150 spears in all; the percentage of hits must therefore be considered splendid, especially if it is considered that the distance was a good twenty-five yards and the coconut no bigger than a man's head.

After this brilliant exhibition we thought it was time for dinner and the distribution of prizes, but our friends thought otherwise and did not give way till we had arranged both a sack race and 'last-pair-out'. Marie-Thérèse and I marveled when out 'mother,' Taupua, who was certainly at least sixty, was invincible in both these events.

Afterwards, however, she disclosed to us the secret of her successes. During her frequent jaunts to Tahiti she had learnt the tricks of these games and she had even on one occasion been woman champion of French Oceania in copra sack-racing. If the good Raroians had heard of the important difference between an amateur and a professional, they would certainly have insisted on Taupua being declared a professional, but they were happily ignorant of this burning problem and were delighted at her successes.

Not even when darkness began to fall would the Raroians stop, and it was not till we had announced a drinking race (with coconuts) that they began to take a serious interest in the feast. But when they had once sat down to huge helpings of roast pork and bread-fruit, weariness soon overcame them and we could proceed to the distribution of prizes in peace and quiet. Besides Teka's beer-bottles the prizes consisted of raisins - an unusual delicacy which was keenly appreciated - chocolate biscuits, and old weekly magazines. To our surprise the weekly magazines proved to be

the most popular prizes, and it even happened that Tapakia, who had won the spear-throwing competition, came and asked if he could not exchange half a dozen bottles of Pilsner for a bundle of weekly magazines! This must be regarded as a unique occurrence, for Tapakia had the reputation of being one of the thirstiest individuals on the island.

But the finest and most notable prizes we ourselves received. In the middle of dinner Tupuhoe rose and handed over to us the Raroian prize of honour - the governor's coconut fibre crown and mother-of-pearl stick. I tried to persuade him to keep the treasures till the governor really visited the island, but Tupuhoe was immovable. He said, in tones which betrayed a certain disappointment, that the Raroians had been waiting for a visit from the governor for forty years and that they would certainly have to wait another forty. I therefore gave way at last and accepted the presents.

The coconut fibre crown came to a sad end (it was blown away one stormy night, when the wind turned our house inside out), but I still have the stick and often use it on formal occasions. Often when I take it out I cannot help wondering whether there is not more than one reason why the handle of the stick which the Raroians meant to give their long-desired governor should take just the form of a tortoise. Our brown-skinned friends do not lack humour!

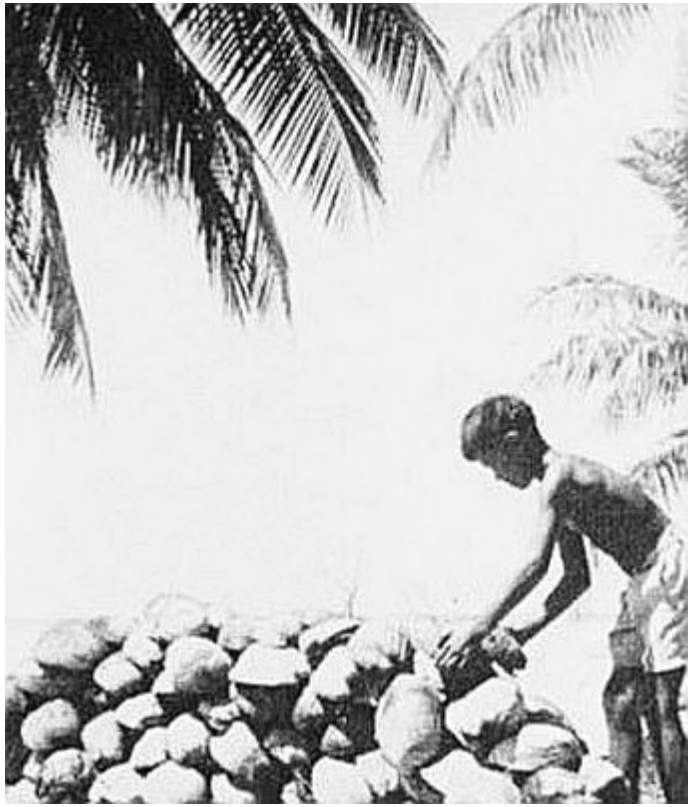
The women practiced long and hard in order to perfect a special dance for the festivities planned for the governor's visit...

....and the men made special gifts for the long-awaited governor. They carved a walking stick, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fashioned the head in the form of a turtle. The other gift was a fiber crown

Dressed in native costume, I tried on a palm-leaf crown, the type usually worn as a sunshade.

When copra is to be made on Raro, a great distance from the village, the whole family sets out in a canoe, loaded down with supplies, and sometimes they even take their galvanized-iron houses.

A wheelbarrow loaded with provisions to be taken to the lagoon islands for the stay while making copra. Note the pups in the basin.



At the lagoon islands, after the nuts have been split with an ax, the halves are piled up, with the cocnut meat facing downward, and left to dry.

After the heaped-up nuts have dried, the copra is removed with a special knife (*above*). A boy drinks the coconut water from one of the three eyes (*below, left*). Raroians now make fire by rubbing two sticks only when matches are not available (*below, right*).

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Rustling Palms

The palm, a remarkable tree - A use for everything — Different kinds of coconut — How children climb — The art of opening a nut - What nuts are used for - Coconut milk and coconut water - Charcoal for smoothing irons - Sweets and strong drinks - Mattress stuffing from crabs - A trip to the lagoon islands -- Camp life - Making fire by rubbing — Irrational division of land - The Raroian upper class - Land survey under difficulties - How copra is made - Care of copra plantations - The rat problem - Happily neglected possibilities

A MISSIONARY on one of the Tuamotu islands once wrote: 'There is scarcely any part of the coconut palm which the South Sea natives cannot make use of, and to describe all the riches with which the Creator has endowed this tree is to sing a hymn in His praise.'

Let us try to describe these remarkable attributes of the coconut palm and how they are exploited and utilized by the Raroians, even if we are unable to continue in the exalted and poetical style of our good friend the missionary.

To begin at the beginning, the dry root fibres are used to make the finest kinds of dance skirt. The fibres, which are collected in a great bunch and are astonishingly thin and fine, are soaked for a week and are then beaten with a wooden club, after which they are ready for use.

The palm trunk is admirably suited for the making of house-posts, and many people throw a house together quickly and cheerfully simply by driving four posts down into the earth and nailing galvanized iron or planks between them. The pith itself is soft and floury, for which reason the tree is not suitable for sawing up into planks, while the outer parts of the trunk consist of hard heavy wood, which in old times was used for making lances and war dubs and is now used principally for furniture and the more delicate carpentering.

Even more useful than the roots and trunk are, of course, the leaves. Every leaf in a palm-top consists of a stiff central nerve, many feet in length, along which the fronds are fixed. By cutting through the central nerve and plaiting together the fronds on the two halves a convenient mat is made, several feet long and about 8 feet long and two feet wide. These

palm-leaf mats are a necessity now as in former times, and the Raroians often make quantities of them to keep in stock. They can be used in many different ways, e.g, to make an enclosure, to cover the copra, or to build house-walls or sheds. Otherwise the palm-leaves are used in more or less the same way as we use paper, and all men, women, and children can make a leaf parcel or plait a basket in the twinkling of an eye.

Now we come to the valuable nuts. When ripe a nut is about the size of a man's head and weighs ten pounds or more. To the outer view it looks smooth and polished, but if you cut it in half you discover that under the smooth surface there is an inner layer of soft fibres which resemble horsehair more than anything else. Embedded in this layer of fibre, which is from two to four inches thick, lies the actual nut. It consists of a hard shell filled with coconut water, which as the nut ripens gives off a thicker and thicker deposit of grease - the coconut meat

Marie-Thérèse and I had always thought that a coconut was a coconut, but after a few weeks on Raroia we saw clearly that we had been mistaken. Although the palms themselves are alike, there are nearly as many different kinds of nuts as there are, for example, of pear or apple, and the Raroians know them all perfectly. For them, as for all Polynesians, the differences are more important than the similarities, and characteristically enough they have no word which corresponds to our 'coconut', but only names for the different kinds.

Once when we asked Tufaka, who has had four years' schooling and speaks French absolutely fluently, to fetch a *noix de coco*, he was completely nonplussed, and finally explained that a coconut as a general term did not exist and that we must say which sort of nut we wanted.

An important and natural way of classifying the nuts is by size and ripeness. Five types are usually distinguished. The smallest, newly formed nuts are called *puriri*. They are never picked and are valuable only because they give rise to larger nuts. During violent squalls the wind blows down masses of *puriri* nuts, and the children often collect them for war games in the same way that American boys do battle with acorns.

The next stage of development is the *rehi*. A *rehi* is an almost full-sized nut in which the coconut water has begun to give off a thin deposit of grease. The water is drinkable, but it does not taste really nice before the next stage, when the nut is called *viavia*. The deposit of grease is, however, insignificant, and it is only in the full-sized nut, *omoto*, that it is nearly half an inch thick. Finally, in the last stage, the nut is called *ngora*. It is dark brown in colour and sometimes has a rather shrivelled appearance; the water is sour and unpleasant to the taste, and the kernel of the nut has reached its maximum thickness, about one inch.

The *ngora* nuts fall as soon as they are ripe. The remainder of the nuts

have to be picked, and this is done in several different ways. The classical method, of course, is to climb the palm-trees for them. Much nonsense has been written about the natives' wonderful climbing powers. In reality, of course, it is no more difficult to climb a palm than to swarm up a rope, which schoolboys and schoolgirls learn to do without any difficulty. If anything it is easier, as the palms have round rings on the trunks which give good support to the feet. To study climbing technique more closely, however, we took some small boys with us one day and found a straight palm which was about eighty feet high.

Mataroa, ten years old, who was considered to be the smartest climber, had the honour of beginning. He embraced the trunk with both hands and hung straight down. Then he drew up his legs as high as he could, got a purchase against the trunk with his feet, arched his back like a cat and stretched out his legs, moving his arms up at the same time. He was now a good many feet up the trunk, and by continually repeating the same series of movements he shot quickly towards the top. The other boys followed, having first for safety's sake drawn a ring of plaited palm-leaves over their feet, which prevented them from slipping too far apart.

In addition to this climbing technique which the small boys showed us the Raroians also use another and more exacting method. By catching hold with one hand a little above the other and moving an arm and a leg alternately, they clamber up more or less as we ascend a ladder. The small but decisive difference is, of course, that to get a grip they must catch hold with their hands *behind* the trunk, which required a considerably stronger grip than climbing a ladder.

Climbing palms, however, has become old-fashioned, like so much else on Raroia. It may be all right for small boys or for an emergency, but in general the islanders have another and much simpler method of getting at the nuts. Every household possesses a long wooden pole with an iron hook at one end, and with its help the Raroians can tear down as many nuts in a twinkling as they want without consuming any unnecessary energy. A further advantage of this implement is that it is admirably suited for carrying the nuts home. By tying them together in pairs and hanging them over the pole a man can easily carry several dozen.

If there is no very great difficulty in picking a nut, a good deal of skill is required to open it, at any rate if one wants to keep the coconut water. One way of opening it is, of course, to cut off the top, fibre and all. But this method the Raroians rightly consider both unpractical and clumsy. It is difficult to cut a piece off quite neatly; moreover, a nut is always heavy and unwieldy so long as the fibre is on it, and in whatever way one holds it one is bound to spill some part of its contents on the ground beside one. The Raroians, therefore, always remove the fibre before they open a nut,

and this they do rather delicately. They sharpen a thick piece of wood about three feet long and drive it down into the ground. Then they grasp the nut with both hands and press it against the upstanding point till it penetrates the fibre to a depth of two or three inches. It is then easy, by carefully working the nut sideways, to loosen a strip of the fibre, which is removed strip by strip in the same way until only the nut itself remains.

At the other end of the nut there are the three eyes. If it is a drinking nut intended for children one of these holes is usually opened. But an adult seldom likes to drink a nut in this way. He prefers to cut a square hole in the opposite end and empty the nut as if it were a giant champagne glass. Whether this habit has contributed to the Raroians' liking for curved glasses and French wines I could not say.

The division of the nuts into *puriri, rehi, viavia, omoto*, and *ngora*, corresponding to different stages of maturity, is, however, insufficient. All *rehi* do not taste the same, nor do all *viavia* or *omoto* have exactly the same characteristics. The Raroians, therefore, have terms which signify small differences and qualities. These can generally be defined by shades of colour, and the three most important are *mamangu, kekeho*, and *kurakura*, which names ate given to green, light yellowish-brown, and red-brown nuts respectively.

By combining these two series of names the Raroians can exactly describe the characteristics and appearance of a nut, and they need never be afraid of suffering what often happened to us at the beginning of our stay, when children came back with a sour uneatable nut instead of a fresh milky one.

The experience of centuries has also told the Raroians how the different varieties should best be used. Let us see what part the most important kinds play in their housekeeping and economy. The best drinking nut is a *viavia kekeho*. It has a faintly sweet taste and often has small air bubbles like mineral waters a day old. The coconut water is best and coolest if the nut is picked early in the morning, but is quite drinkable all day, as the thick fibre covering shuts out the worst heat. A *viavia mamangu* is also drinkable, but rather more bitter in taste. It is therefore admirably suited for drinking while at work, as the sweeter *viavia kekeho* increases thirst rather than diminishes it.

While the coconut water is used exclusively for drinking, the meat of the coconut is put to much more varied uses. As early as the *rehi* stage the nut is sought for and eaten straight out of the shell. Its consistency is roughly that of soft cheese, and it is rightly considered a great delicacy. As a rule this kind of nut-meat is the first solid food a child gets, and when a child is only two or three years old it plays a large part in his bill of fare. But the nut with the most valuable meat is undoubtedly the mature *ngora*

nut. The nuts found in American greengrocers' shops are exclusively of this type, for the simple reason that it is the only sort of nut which can be transported for a long distance without rotting; the coconut water in these nuts is sour and the meat generally hard and thick.

The Raroians, therefore, like the Polynesians in general, use the *ngora* nuts exclusively in their grated form for different dishes or for making sauce. Every household uses at least half a dozen *ngora* nuts a day, and they are still grated in the primitive Polynesian manner. The instrument used is an *ana*, a four-legged wooden stool which has a projecting wooden arm. The only well known object I can think of which in any way resembles this implement is really a wooden toy horse. A crescent-shaped piece of iron (formerly a piece of mother-of-pearl) is nailed firmly to the 'head', or wooden arm, of the stool.

When a woman wants to grate a nut she first cuts it in half across the middle, then she takes a half in one hand, sits astride the stool and presses it against the cutting iron, while at the same time she spins it round with the other hand. In this way the nut is soon transformed into thin finely separated flakes, which are generally allowed to fall straight down into a dish on the ground.

It is from this grated coconut pulp that the famous coconut milk is made. The recipe is very simple. One takes a piece of cloth - or failing a cloth the fibrous tissue which surrounds the leafstalks on young palms - wraps the coconut pulp in it, and presses with all one's might till the coconut milk begins to trickle out. That is all. The liquid is exactly like ordinary milk in appearance, but is never drunk. Instead it is very often used as sauce, and on every well-provided dinner-table one finds, for example, a bowl of coconut milk mixed with sea water, in which the Raroians dip all their food, whatever it may be - bread-fruit, fish, preserves, or bread - before they put it into their mouths.

A short explanation may not be out of place. In America, as in most European countries, the term coconut milk is used for the clear liquid inside a coconut. This liquid, however, should be called coconut water - as I have done in this book - while the term coconut milk is really applicable to the greasy juice which is pressed out of the grated nut meat. The earliest Pacific explorers called this white sauce, very suitably, coconut milk, but later on botanists and South Sea enthusiasts who had never seen a coconut made the mistake of using this term for what should properly be called coconut water, and the mistake still stubbornly persists.

But the coconut water and nut meat are by no means the only parts of the nut which are made use of. From the shells themselves scoops and bowls are made, which after a little polishing with coral stone obtain a beautiful dark-brown sheen, and in recent times the natives have begun to

use the shells in a new and original way; they make charcoal from them. The ultimate reason why the Raroians need this fuel is, comically enough, their conversion at the end of the last century. Previously they had only worn a few scraps of clothing of plaited pandanus or gone about quite or half naked. This, of course, the missionaries considered incompatible with Christian morality, and at last they succeeded in persuading the people to get themselves at least a pair of trousers or a dress.

After they had rigged themselves out in *popaa* clothes, they also wanted, in the *popaa* style, to increase their elegance by pressing their clothes. For this they required smoothing irons. The only smoothing irons for sale on board the schooners were of an old-fashioned English make, and were heated with charcoal which was stuffed into a container inside. Thus the Raroians came to need charcoal, and after a short period of experiment they found that coconut shells were the best raw material. So we see, it is not always necessity which is the mother of invention!

To continue the enumeration, there is still another part of the nut which has not yet been mentioned. If one lets a *ngora* nut grow till the leaf begins to appear, the nut is filled up with a porous fibrous pulp. This pulp is called *nounou* and is highly valued for various reasons. First and foremost it can be eaten in a raw state, when it most resembles a gigantic sweet and floury apple. On Raroia, therefore, *nounou* plays roughly the same part as candy with us. The only difference is that the Raroia children get their sweets more easily. They need neither money nor shops, but have only to pick up a few of the nuts which lie upon the ground everywhere.

In recent years, however, the adults too have begun to take more and more interest in the *nounou* nuts. They have discovered that a strong beer can be made from the contents of these nuts, and have made an extensive use of this substitute since the export of spirits and beer to the Tuamotu islands has been forbidden.

As the Raroians see everything on a large scale, they always brew at least a cask of beer at a time. The cask invariably contains fifty gallons and is usually a petrol drum; it is placed right over the fire and is filled with *nounou* and water. After a few hours' boiling the *nounou* pulp is taken out and yeast, sugar, and rice added, after which everything is allowed to boil for some time longer. The drink has a fresh fruity taste, but is so strong that it often takes several days for the population to empty one of these casks, although they all certainly do their best.

There remains the fibre. Its primary importance is as fuel, since there are few trees on the island and those which exist are wanted for house-building and carpentering. On the other hand, the Raroians have an unlimited supply of fibre, and generally kill two birds with one stone when they cut up a few coconuts for a meal. The meat and coconut water are

used for food and drink, and the fibre to make a fire under the cooking-pots and saucepans.

In old (and perhaps also good) times all rope and string were made of coconut fibre, but since the schooners have begun to sell hemp ropes and paper string the Raroians have naturally abandoned the native material, although it is better and more durable. Many of the islanders have found, however, that coconut fibre makes excellent stuffing for a mattress and in their delight at this have stuffed their mattresses so full that they are as round as sausages. Of course they cannot lie on them, but that does not matter, as the beds are there only for show, to impress the neighbours.

As the trees are groaning under the weight of coconuts and large heaps of fibre lie about everywhere, I was for a long time surprised that all the Raroians had not mattresses of the keenly admired sausage shape. This mystery was cleared up for me one day by Tunui, when I asked him why he, too, did not make himself a mattress.

"I'd like to have a little fibre," he replied. "But it's hard to find new crabs' holes."

"Crabs' holes?" I exclaimed in amazement. "What have crabs' holes to do with coconut fibre?"

"Don't you know?" Tunui asked, every bit as astonished as myself. "There's a kind of large crab here in the Tuamotu islands that lives on coconuts. They've two big claws as sharp as knives. To get at the kernel of the nut they tear the fibre away thread by thread and leave the nut in the sun till it cracks. So there are always masses of torn-off fibre, ready for use, outside the crabs' holes. As soon as I find some new crabs' holes I shall stuff my mattress."

I suggested to Tunui that he should tear off a little coconut fibre himself, but this he considered an unthinkable solution.

A further original use of the coconut fibre - or, to be more correct, of the outer covering of certain nuts which from one cause or another had not become fibrous - should perhaps be mentioned before we leave this subject. The word *kaipoa* is applied by the Raroians to a *rehi* or *viavia* nut which has a thick outer covering of about the same consistency as a sugar-beet or turnip. The remarkable thing about this covering is that it is eatable and a great quencher of thirst. So when we want a little fresh food we simply fetch a *kaipoa* nut and cut it up, and we've got a first-class salad at once!

This short account (naturally far from complete) will perhaps give some idea of the important part which the coconut palm plays in the life of the Raroians and of all other Polynesian peoples confined to the meagre resources of an atoll. But the importance of all these foodstuffs and other necessaries with which the coconut palm provides the Raroians *directly* is

small compared with the prosperity it brings them *indirectly* through copra. While, for example, the nuts could formerly only be used for food and as drink, through the development of the copra trade they have become a kind of money growing on trees and enabling the Raroians to satisfy all their wishes and caprices.

Our first initiation into the mysteries of copra manufacture took place one day at the beginning of the year when we accompanied the Raroians to their plantations on their islands in the lagoon south of the village. Everyone of course had assembled in the village during Christmas, but as soon as the Epiphany was past many began to talk of going off, 'as the price of copra might fall any day'. But a visit from a schooner, a miraculous haul of fish, a feast, and a few illustrated newspapers which we had received by post detained them all; indeed a whole month passed before anyone recollected his intention of hurrying away.

We had asked Rauri to tell us when it was time to get ready, and early one afternoon at the beginning of February he suddenly came and informed us that the departure would be next morning.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" I said in a tone of mild reproach. "There's a lot of work to do, packing and clearing up everything, if we're to stay a month in the lagoon islands."

"I'd have told you earlier with pleasure," Rauri replied, laughing. "But it wasn't decided till now. When a Raroian gets an idea it's like a stroke of lightning. It comes suddenly and unexpectedly, and if it doesn't catch on at once it never will. So I should advise you to have everything ready early tomorrow morning."

Rauri's advice was good, for next morning there was a regular break-up atmosphere. When we came trudging down with our sailors' duffel-bags on our backs, almost all the Raroians were assembled down on the beach and ten outrigger canoes already lay rocking on the waves with their sails flapping merrily in the wind. We got into Rauri's canoe, into which Taupua, Ruarangi, Tarakeha, Nganahoa, Ihi, Rauri junior, and Rari (i.e. the whole of our family by adoption) had already crammed themselves. The hold had naturally been loaded to capacity long before, and on deck there was a glorious muddle of household equipment, clothes, axes, and puppies (our provision!). We may have looked a little uneasy as we sat down on the outrigger arm, for Rauri at once said soothingly:

"There's no danger for us. The canoe is new and the rail is always a hand's breadth above the water. Be glad that you're not in Tapakia's canoe, for that's old and rotten; besides, he always takes his house with him when he goes to the canoe islands."

"Takes his house with him?" I asked in astonishment.

"Yes, He's too lazy to make a house of plaited coconut leaves every

time he comes to a new lagoon island, and so he takes his iron house to pieces and takes it with him."

On closer inspection we too found that Tapakia's canoe was so packed with children and shining galvanized iron that it was on the verge of capsizing.

Soon the whole flotilla was on its way south bound for Raro (the south-western part of the island). Some of the passengers had taken their guitars, and while the canoes ploughed forward through the waves one of the young men in the leading canoe struck up an ancient travel song, which was in fact a trustful prayer to the gods to grant a fair wind and a safe passage. The wind carried the song on from canoe to canoe, and soon a mighty chorus of male voices blended with the rushing of the waves and the crying of the gulls. The words and tune were simple, and it was not long before we were able to join in the cheerful refrain:

Hoe mat ra, hoe atu ra,
Hoe mai te vaka nei,
Na te vaka i tapiri to tatou fenua!

Let us paddle here, let us paddle there,
Let us paddle this canoe,
The canoe which nears our land!

After a good hour's sail we arrived at Raro, which proved to be a string of small islands several miles long, separated by channels of varying depth. While the other canoes went on, Rauri steered into a creek on the largest island, which may have been three-quarters of a mile long and certainly was not more than a few hundred yards wide. We cast anchor in the pale light-green water far up the creek and waded in towards the shore, where a house was visible among the palms. It consisted of a single room without windows and was wholly of the old. Tuamotu style.

While Ruarangi and Taupua swiftly plaited some palm-leaves together to repair a few holes in the roof, the rest of us fetched dry ferns, which we spread out on the floor of crushed coral. This completed the furnishing, and we went on to arrange the kitchen. Tarakeha drove two cleft wooden sticks into the ground and laid the branch of a tree along them, on which he hung up two cooking-pans and a coffee-pot. Then Rauri fetched the rest of the household utensils and hung them up on a bush in the neighbourhood, while the rest of us collected coconut fibre and other fuel. The kitchen also was now ready, and we were able to devote ourselves to other and more important matters.

A round of visits to our neighbours on the nearest islands, which we paid with Rauri on the two following days, soon showed us that our dwelling was astonishingly well-equipped and comfortable in comparison

with those of many others, Rakenui and Vananga, for example, who were at work malting copra a little farther south, had only a low tent-like house and a box of preserves, which they heated right over the fire, while Tukaoko lived on board his canoe with neither canned goods nor cooking-pans.

But Heiao's way of life was the most primitive of all. He slept behind a wind-screen, i.e. a roof of plaited palm-leaves which reached down to the ground, and had no household equipment with him. He began his day by emptying two coconuts and then at once set about making copra. About midday he quenched his thirst with two more nuts and slept for a few hours till the worst heat was over, when he set to work again. Not till dusk began to fall did he knock off and harpoon a couple of fish, which he fried on the coals. He may have taken an afternoon off now and then to catch sea birds and lobsters or to collect birds' eggs, but these were the only breaks in his simple existence.

"If I build a wind-screen on every island where I make copra, I am never fax from home," Heiao explained. "Rauri has a fine house all right, but often it may be half an hour or an hour's walk from the plantation where he's working. There's no point in bringing a lot of belongings with one either. One can't take them about everywhere to one's different working-places, and if they're left in the house one has to go back to every meal. It's too much trouble."

Rauri pointed out that the advantage of having a house and being properly established was that a man could take his family with him, but Heiao, like most of those who adopted his method of work, seemed to have difficulty in seeing the importance of this; they seemed rather to find it a relief to get away from their wives and children for a time.

I asked Heiao what equipment he considered absolutely necessary.

"A pair of shorts, a *pareu*, an axe, a copra knife, and a fishing spear," he replied unhesitatingly. "I seldom have with me more than that."

"But what about matches?" I objected. "You won't want to eat your fish raw?"

"Matches are a good thing to have," Heiao answered quietly, "but not absolutely necessary. If I haven't any, or if they have got wet, I do this."

Without rising he broke off a bough from a bush dose by and cut it in two lengthways with his copra knife. He laid one half on the ground before him, and gripped the other firmly with both hands. Then he put the point of the stick he held in his hands against the groove down the middle of the other, which was full of a dry pith like sawdust, and moved it carefully to and fro several times. When the fine dust had collected in a small heap at the farther end of the groove, he increased the tempo and at the same time put more vigour into his movement. In a minute the groove

down the middle of the lower stick began to assume a brownish colour, and in a little while we could clearly detect the smell of burnt wood.

Sweat was dripping from Heiao's forehead and his whole body was trembling with the strain. Suddenly a light smoke rose from the little heap of fuel, and soon we could see the glow of sparks as well. Heiao laid aside the rubbing stick and blew vigorously at the smouldering fire. Little flames sprang up and he hastened to hold up a piece of coconut fibre over them. In a few minutes a fitre was blazing before us. Heiao's answer was clear enough.

Many of our friends whom we visited during our stay on Raroia lived lives as solitary and isolated as Heiao's, and it sometimes happened that they did not see any other human being for several weeks. Several of the families soon divided, moreover, in order to get on with the work more quickly.

It seemed to me therefore rather curious that the worthy Raroians had been so particular about all beginning work on the copra at the same time and going to the working-place together. I asked Rauri if it was always done in the same way, and he said it was. He also told me that the island was divided into four districts, in which copra was made in turn during four exactly defined periods, with a month or two of rest in between.

"But when everyone makes copra by himself, why has the island been divided into districts and why do you all go to and from work together?" I asked.

"Well, that's hard to say, but it's always like that with everything on Raroia," Rauri answered. "If someone goes off to catch turtle, everyone immediately wants to catch turtle. If someone buys a red *pareu*, all the others immediately want to have red *pareu*. Once Maono bought a pair of dark glasses on board a schooner. Next time a schooner came everyone bought dark glasses. They were almost black and we had to take them off if we wanted to see properly, but the main thing was that we all had dark glasses like Maono's."

We soon found that there was another and considerably more rational explanation, which Rauri had evidently been ashamed to mention, of the Raroians' gregariousness. They are afraid of being robbed by their neighbours if they do not keep an eye on their plantations; so either everyone goes to the lagoon islands, or no one is allowed to go!

There are undeniably some grounds for this fear, and the senseless division of the land is certainly the main reason why the Raroians, otherwise so astonishingly honourable, are a trifle light-fingered in the matter of copra nuts. According to tradition the parents always give their children a piece of land when they marry. Naturally, the land is divided up in the same way whenever it is inherited. With each generation, therefore,

the pieces of land have diminished in size and increased in number. At the same time each has had his pieces of land more and more scattered over the island.

The situation was the same in medieval Europe, but the difficulties were gradually overcome by exchange and purchase. The Raroians, however, have opposed all attempts at reform and obstinately refuse to believe that any other patch of land could be as good as that which they have inherited from their fathers. The consequence has been that most of the lagoon islands are divided among ten, twenty, or thirty owners, and that there is not a single island, however small, which is owned by one man alone.

These irrational conditions naturally impede the making of copra, and most people are obliged to make, perhaps, half a dozen journeys to different lagoon islands to get in the same amount of copra as they could make in half the time if they had all their land in one place. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many people would pick as many nuts as they can get hold of without bothering about boundaries, if the owners of the neighbouring patches are not near.

The Raroians are as unwilling to exchange their land as to sell it. The natural consequence has been an unequal distribution of the land. While, for example, in one clan there have been many large families for several generations, in another there may have been only a few. With this general unwillingness to sell land, the only way in which those who have come off badly can hope to better their position is through an advantageous marriage. But this is no easier on Raroia than elsewhere, and the difference between the large and small owners of land tends to increase rather than diminish.

Exactly how much land each man has is rather difficult to judge, but in any case there is a small 'upper class' of five or six persons, who have more than twice as much land as the average holder, and there are about the same number who have only just enough (by Raroian standards). In practice this has no very great importance, as those who are rich in land are unable to harvest all their copra themselves and are only thankful to be able to employ those who have not land enough. The conditions of these agreements are very generous, and the landowner and workman always share the net takings equally between them. A hard-working person could, therefore, easily earn a small fortune in this way without owning a single coconut palm himself. But, of course, no such person exists on Raroia.

Another evil of the unpractical division of land under which the Raroians have long suffered is, naturally, that it gives rise to legal disputes. Far back in pre-European times there were feuds and fights about land, and these became more and more common when the copra schooners

began to appear and the nuts acquired an enhanced value. At last the authorities grew tired of the continual trouble and resolved to settle all the disputed cases once and for all and issue title deeds to all the landowners who could make their claims good.

The Tuamotuans' thorough knowledge of their family genealogies made this work considerably easier than it would otherwise have been, and by calling together councils, in which all the older people took part, it was possible on most of the islands to clear up the complicated relationships, and therewith the right to possession, fairly quickly. So far so good. But how could one determine the size and location of the pieces of land on those islands which had never been surveyed and mapped?

As the authorities had no surveyors at their disposal they contented themselves with giving orders to the chiefs on all the Tuamotu islands to measure out the land at once and send in to Papeete a list of the owners' names. This, of course, was done on most of the islands in the same way as on Raroia. After a few days the chief got tired of crawling round measuring pieces of land which were not his own, and relieved himself of the troublesome task in the same way as his superiors, i.e. by delegating it to others. He simply called the inhabitants together, gave each a few hundred yards of string, and sent them out to measure their land themselves.

The result can easily be imagined, and one of the old men who took part in it once gave me the following account of how this famous survey was conducted:

> "You'll understand,' he said, "that it was a bit difficult, as many of us could neither count nor write, and no one had ever measured land before. But in spite of this everything might have gone well if it had not been for the bushes. On most of the islands there are masses of scrub, as you know. To be able to measure properly, of course we should have had to clear away the scrub. But we all thought that was too much trouble, and we soon found another way out.
>
> "We fastened a bit of coral to one end of a string and flung it over the bushes. When we got back to the village the chief measured the strings and calculated how large our pieces of land were. He wrote the result down in a big book which he sent to Papeete, and after a time we got our title-deeds.
>
> "All went well till Tara began to clear his piece of land. When he measured his land afterwards to check up, it was naturally much less than when he had measured it with the bushes on it. Then at last we began to realize that we had deceived ourselves. We had indeed the title to the land - but we had the title to more land than there was on the island! As no one would give way disputes became even commoner and more violent than before. The administrator had to do the whole division over again and take a bit off every piece of land before we got any secure boundaries."

We had many opportunities of studying the manufacture of copra during the month in which we lived with Rauri and our family by adoption

on the lagoon islands. The work was the simplest imaginable, and the whole family always took part in it. While the children and old people collected the *ngora* nuts which had fallen during the last few months of their absence, Rauri and Tarakeha took out their long-handled axes. A lifetime of practice had given them such certainty and skill that they dove nuts into two exactly equal halves with one single well-directed blow without ever missing, and their movements were so easy and automatic that they did not even think about them, but laughed and chatted together all the time.

As soon as the nuts had been cut in half they poured out the last drops of the sour and worthless coconut water and piled up the halves of the nuts in neat little heaps with the convex outside upwards and the hollow inside, with the white coconut meat, downwards. In this simple way the nut-meat was protected against rain (which easily causes it to rot), while at the same time the air had free access, and Rauri and his family left the nuts in safety and moved on to another place to continue the same work.

After all the working places had been visited, which took a week, we returned to the first place. The nut-meat dried and ready to be collected. Everyone sat down in front of a heap of nut halves and with an S-shaped knife began to cut off the copra, as the nut-meat is called in a dry state. It was astonishingly easy and quick work; to get the copra off, it was as a rule sufficient to insert the knife and spin the half-nut vigorously once. Rauri's family easily completed this round tour of the different working-places in one or two days; when the nuts were being cut up it had taken another week. The finished copra was poured into sacks and was ready for export at once!

The general calculation on Raroia is that a man who, like Rauri and Tarakeha, has the whole family to help him can easily make three tons of copra a month, while one man alone can manage at least two tons a month. This tempo, which is considered quite satisfactory on Raroia, is anything but severe, and it has happened on several occasions that Tahitian hired labourers have made a ton a week. The Raroians, however, afraid of being affected by this unnecessary display of energy, have in most cases promptly returned these record-breakers to their native island and engaged more steady-going Tuamotuans.

Even more simple than the manufacture of copra is the care of the copra plantations, or to be more correct, the Raroians' way of taking care of their plantations. Here, too, they follow their usual policy of doing as little as possible. They may plant a palm - i,e. dig a hole and throw in a nut - and from the moment it has taken root they pay no further attention to it.

The palm is a remarkable tree, however, and as a rule it looks after itself quite well. After only five or six years it has reached a height of

between sixteen and thirty feet and is beginning to bear fruit. It then bears regularly for at least fifty years, and often up to eighty - still, of course, without any care being given to it. If one adds that there is no season, but that the nuts ripen and fall in regular succession all the year round, one understands that the palm is the ideal tree for the Raroians.

The size of the annual yield naturally depends on many different factors, but as a rule one can calculate that each palm gives about fifty nuts a year. As four nuts are needed to make a kilo (2.2 lbs) of copra, and there are about eighty palms to every hectare (nearly 2½ acres), this would correspond to about a ton of copra per hectare every year. In reality the Raroians' annual production is considerably more modest - for the simple reason that a large quantity of the nuts rot or are eaten by rats.

No nuts, of course, would need to rot if the plantations were cleared regularly, but as this is both hard and monotonous work, the Raroians prefer to let the undergrowth grow freely and spread as it pleases. The natural consequence is that masses of nuts simply disappear into the tangle of leaves and boughs. I once asked Tarakeha cautiously why he did not take the trouble to tidy up a little, and his reply was most illuminating.

"No, why should I? " he said. "I can't even cut up the nuts which I get without any effort. To dear away the scrub to get more nuts would only mean unnecessary trouble."

"But why not employ a few labourers when you've so many nuts?" I asked.

"That would be an idea, of course. But it's almost impossible to get hold of any labourers nowadays; besides, I'm satisfied with everything as it is."

The plague of rats is another unnecessary evil. All over the small islands multitudes of empty nuts are lying about with a round hole close to the stalk where the fibre is thinnest. This is the work of rats. Most of them simply live in the palm-tops, where they alternately eat holes in the nuts and feast on the contents. When they have finished off the nuts on one tree they go on to the next. The best way to protect the palms is to fasten a broad iron ring round the trunk, and in Tahiti they have in this way completely got rid of the rats on many plantations. I pointed this out to Rauri and asked him why he did not put iron rings round the trees.

"No, that's no good here on Raroia," he replied. "The rats jump over."

"Then you must make broader iron rings."

"They'll jump over anyway."

"The rats never jump over the rings in Tahiti," I stubbornly persisted.

But this had no effect on Rauri.

"Perhaps," he answered, "but here on Raroia we have different rats."

I gave it up, for of course it was really the same with the rats as with

the clearing. Why should the Raroians protect their palms against rats, when they have more nuts than they can deal with in any case? They have achieved what they consider the right balance between work and income, and they have no desire to imperil it. The best proof of this, by the way, is that on Raroia, in contrast to most places in the world, production goes down as soon as the price goes up!

I have often amused myself by trying to imagine what would happen if a rational man of business ability took over the copra plantations on Raroia. The first thing he would do would certainly be to solve the labour problem in one way or another. After that he would presumably see that the natural sources of power were utilized. Although the islanders do not know it, there are two first-class sources of power on Raroia, which should be able to supply electricity for machinery; the ceaseless trade wind and the strong current in the entrance to the lagoon. These should be able to drive machines facilitating the manufacture of copra - for example, drying apparatus and saws.

A real business man would also easily find new and better ways of utilizing the wealth of the coconut palm. For example, he would certainly make ropes, mats, and similar articles from the fibre, and he might also be tempted to try to export canned coconut milk and coconut water. Nor would he have any difficulty in finding uses for the leaves and roots, not to speak of the shells.

But all this would only be a beginning, for sooner or later the day would come when he would begin to consider whether many of the products of copra which are now made in Europe for example, soap, margarine, and oil - could not be made at considerably lower cost on Raroia or at any rate in French Oceania. Overwhelmed by the immense possibilities which I see opening before me, I will stop there and carry the train of thought no further.

It need hardly be added that we hope, for our own sake and that of our friends, that no such rational man of business ability win ever appear on the island, for it would inevitably mean the end of the cheerful happy existence which we have learnt to love and cherish as much as the Raroians themselves.

CHAPTER NINE

Our Daily Fish

Fish instead of bread — A natural fish-basket - Hundreds of species - Obsolete catching methods - Stone traps - Whales — Spearing fish in the lagoon - Accuracy of aim - Spearing fish on the outer reef — Unique hunting dogs - Nets of palm leaves - Exciting night fishing - No float, no worm - Eels and lobsters - Catching turtles by hand — Plenty of sharks — Dangerous only to strangers — Chinaman's perilous canoe trip — A true fishing story

OUR Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily *fish*.....

Thus a little girl on Raroia once prayed. She was perfectly right, for on Raroia fish plays an incomparably more important part than bread. Many people never eat bread, and those who do bake only occasionally - for example, at Christmas, Easter, or some other principal festival. Fish, on the other hand, the Raroians eat practically every day, and their favourite dishes all consist of sea food in different forms.

It would be hard to expect anything else from a people living on a level with the sea's surface in the middle of the world's greatest ocean on an island which forms a gigantic natural fish-basket. Every day thousands and tens of thousands of fish stream with the tide into the relatively shallow lagoon, and many stay behind and multiply there. Others seem to have lived there for countless generations and thrive nowhere else than among the coral shallows and seaweed. (How they originally came there I leave it to the ichthyologists to explain.)

The island's resemblance to an ordinary fish-basket ceases in that there are easily obtainable fish not only inside the Raroia basin but also outside. The broad shelf-like outer reef is, for example, a popular feeding-ground for many kinds of fish and all along the barrier formed by the reef other fish are continually darting in and out through holes and chinks. The whole place is crammed with fish, and the Raroians can literally scoop up as many as they like without any diminution in the supply being perceptible.

How many kinds of fish there are in the Raroia lagoon and in the sea

round the island no one knows for certain, but I have been able, without any special effort, to draw up a list containing over two hundred fishes' names, and the Raroians know the names of at least as many again.

Even if all these names do not really represent a corresponding number of different species as recognized by science - for instance, the Raroians often use different names for a large, a medium-sized, and a small fish of the same kind - it is still a fairly impressive total. As the temperature of the water is between 80° and 86° all the year round, the fish are naturally quite unlike those found in our more northern latitudes; indeed, we have not yet found a single fish that we knew before.

Some of the fish are many feet long and weigh as much as a full-grown man, others are so small that there is room for several hundreds in an ordinary deep dish. Some have great pointed noses, others have fins which look like angels' wings and some have spikes like a hedgehog, but all have a lovely sheen and display all imaginable colours and combinations of colour.

Some have patterns that could never be imagined; a common fish which is called *karava* (of the genus Balistes), indulges in the following surrealistic, almost bewildering orgy of colouring: round the mouth, light red lines giving the impression of a careless make-up. On the upper part of the head, a brown triangle containing a large, stupid eye, not unlike a symbol frequently used by certain theosophical societies. On the lower part of the head (the chin, if the expression may be allowed), pale green spots which have a depressing appearance. On the bade, transparent pale green fins. On the hinder part of the body, orange-coloured zebra stripes on a light brown background. On the tail fin, a blue labyrinth with yellow spots which seem to be going round and round without being able to find the way out. Not even Dali could surpass this!

The Raroians do not care in the least about the appearance of the fish; the most important thing for them is that the fish are eatable. With some few exceptions (well known to everyone) they are not only eatable but extraordinarily good. Some taste exactly like Baltic herrings, others like haddock or cod, while the taste of many has been quite new and unknown to us. The best thing, however, is that there are no two kinds of fish which taste alike, and this is no doubt the principal explanation of the fact that we, like the Raroians, can eat fish at least five or six times a week without growing tired of it.

To make a fish diet varied one must, of course, be sure of being able to catch the different sorts at will. The Raroians have solved this problem perfectly, and they need never be disappointed with the results of a fishing expedition. In contrast to our Sunday fishermen, they never fish on chance, but always decide first what sort of fish they want and choose the

implements and localities which they know by experience to be the best for just that kind. As marine life and natural conditions have not changed in the last few thousand years, most of the methods of fishing employed by the Raroians have not changed either to any appreciable extent since heathen times.

A good deal of fishing types have, of course, been abandoned; thus, for example, the huge stone traps which one meets with here and there along the shore of the lagoon are no longer used. These traps - often with arms several hundred yards long and a labyrinth of compartments in which the fish easily lose their way - provided the islanders with quantities of food in old times. Although they could be put into working order with comparative ease no one lifts a finger to repair them. The reason is quite simply that the old communal spirit and solidarity have disappeared, as there is no longer any strong temporal or religious authority to compel the Raroians to collaborate.

"There's no point in trying to repair the stone traps," Tupuhoe explained to us one day. "It would only mean trouble and quarrelling. The stone traps belong to everyone. Suppose we repair them and decide that the catch shall be divided into equal shares on certain days. That's easy enough. But how are we going to prevent people from sneaking off at night and stealing the fish? We can't keep watch all day and ail night. In the old days one of the priests used to declare the stone traps taboo, and then no one dared touch the fish. That was a good simple way of doing it. But no one believes in a taboo nowadays."

In pre-European times the Raroians could sometimes obtain a slight change of diet by killing whales which were stranded on the outer reef. But they had to give up this exciting sport long ago for the simple reason that intensive hunting has made an end of nearly all the whales in Tuamotuan waters. When quite lately, for the first time in thirty years, a whale was stranded at the southeastern end of the island, the Raroians were so astonished and helpless that they could not decide what to do till it had both died and decomposed.

The methods of fishing which have been preserved are quite original and interesting. The favourite implement is a harpoon or a spear, and these are used for fishing both in the lagoon and on the outer reef. To give an idea of how fish are speared in the lagoon I will describe one of the many fishing expeditions on which I have gone with Maono and Tehei during the long time we lived on Raroia.

As usual, the sun had only just risen when my friends came to fetch me. They both had the same equipment; a slender, light spear about ten feet long, with a sharp iron point, a pair of spectacles closely fitted round the eyes, and a loin-cloth fastened round the waist with a string. That was

all.

It had rained during the night, and the coconut-shell bailer was floating in three or four inches of water at the bottom of Maono's canoe. Maono quickly emptied the canoe, which was drawn high up on the beach, by turning it upside down; then we caught hold of the two boughs which connected the hull with the outrigger and hauled it a little way out into the water. The canoe was only just large enough to hold us, and the waves splashed in over the bulwarks when we turned it head to wind.

After half an hour's paddling we reached a large circular shoal a mile or two from the shore. When we were still a long way off we saw some black spots moving to and fro in the shallow water over the shoal. These were fishes' fins sticking up above the surface, a sign of a good catch. We jumped over on to the shoal, which was as large as a circus arena, and hauled up the canoe. The fish, which had been breakfasting on small creatures and seaweed which lived in the cracks in the coral, had disappeared, but we could see them in the cleat water, many feet deeper, beside the shoal.

Tehei and Maono took off their spectacles and spat vigorously on the insides of them (to prevent mist from forming). Then they took their spears and slipped cautiously down into the water. After filling their lungs well, they lay down comfortably on their stomachs in the waves, as if they had arranged themselves on a sofa. They lay quietly for a long time, looking down towards the sea-bottom, with their backs and hips above, but their faces underwater. Now and then they pushed up their mouths and noses above the surface of the water in order to breathe, but as soon as they had filled their lungs they continued the search.

In a little while Maono seemed to have caught sight of a suitable quarry, for he took a firm grip of the butt end of his spear and dived. When the eddies of foam had disappeared and the water had become clear again I saw him already deep down below me. With his spear pointed straight ahead of him he was slowly approaching his quarry, a floundering *tarei* a couple of feet long. Then he checked himself, brought his spear back into position for throwing, and struck.

A few seconds later the spear floated up to the surface with the transfixed fish on the iron point, and immediately after Maono's satisfied face appeared. Meanwhile Tehei had dived, and when he came up again he too had a big *tarei* on the point of his spear. Then they drew breath and dived again, still with the fishes on the point of their spears. According to the Raroians it is much easier to harpoon a *tarei* if one has another on the spear already, as this lulls the new fish into a sense of security, if it does not actually induce it to come nearer. I thought at first that this was only an ordinary fisherman's superstition, but daily observation has finally

convinced me that it is really the case. But this is true only of certain kinds of fish; with many others this method has the effect of scaring them away.

Maono and Tehei proceeded slowly along the coral shoal, and now they were harpooning one *tarei* after another. They never kept more than one on the spear-point at once, but threaded the new fish on the strings round their waist as they caught them. It was a good half-hour before they had made the round of the coral shoal, and when at last they got back to the canoe they had about ten fish hanging like an ornamental wreath about their hips.

When they tossed the catch over to me I discovered that several of the fish were cut off at the middle, while of others only the heads remained. I asked curiously how this could have happened.

"Oh," Maono replied, "there must have been small sharks about. One can't always see what's happening behind one's back."

"H'm," I said, "but wouldn't it be better to be a bit more careful? Suppose the sharks took you for the fish!"

"There's no risk of that with these sharks. They're no more dangerous than dogs. Come along, and we'll start again from the beginning!"

I took hold of the paddle, and followed slowly while my comrades made a new round of the shoal. Now and again I stopped and threw overboard a few handfuls of crushed hermit crabs. Tempted by this rare delicacy, the fish forgot all caution and left their safe hiding-places in the crevices of the coral shoal and under the large stones on the sea-bottom, Maono and Tehei were not slow to seize the chance, and when we came back to our starting place the bottom of the boat was quite covered with a layer of wriggling *tarei*.

I examined them more closely. About half had been holed by the spear in the gills (which most fishermen aim at), some in the head, and the rest in the fleshy parts of the body. This showed a fairly accurate aim, but it was mere bungling compared with what Temorere can do. He harpoons all his fish in the eyes with practical certainty!

Even greater sureness and swiftness are required to harpoon sea fish from the outer reef. This kind of spear fishing is carried on only in quiet weather and on the lee side of the island, but despite this the difficulties and the risks are great. The reef is full of holes and crannies, which the foaming water makes it hard to see; the sea regularly sends in a huge swell, which pours over the reef in rushing rivers, and the seaweed often forms a treacherous carpet on which it is hard to get a footing. But this does not trouble the Raroians, who scuttle about on the reef with their spears perfectly at ease in the midst of the fiercest breakers, and manage at the same time both to see where they put their feet and to keep a look-out for a suitable quarry.

The reef does not form a smooth level wall; on the contrary, it is jagged and cut into by many deep creeks or fjords. When the swell and waves sweep up towards the reef the water is naturally sucked in towards these openings with particular force, and it often happens that fish of all kinds accompany it. It is just at these gaps in the reef-barrier that the Raroians try to harpoon the fish. They have to look out for the right moment, and the right moment is at the same time the riskiest. It comes just when the water on the reef has reached its maximum height and the treacherous backwash is beginning.

According to the Raroians it is useless to place oneself by a creek in the reef beforehand and wait quietly for the quarry, for this would frighten the fish away. They always wait about ten yards farther in on the reef while the water is rising, and hurry to the outer edge of the reef when it begins to run back. It takes perhaps ten seconds for the wave to draw back, and for the first five seconds at least the water is foaming and bubbling too violently for it to be possible to make out the quarry. When the wave has run right back, it is, of course, too late to try to use a harpoon. He who would catch a fish has thus about five seconds to do it in - while the water is dealing and the wave is beginning to draw back again - to get ready, detect the quarry, aim, and throw the spear!

But not even if the mark is hit is the catch secure. The harpooner must grasp his spear before it disappears seaward, and if he hesitates even for a moment one can be sure that a shark will get there first. The sharks are as a rule unbelievably impudent; several times, indeed, I have seen one dash up and snap the catch out of the fisherman's hands when he was trying to save it. As the fish the Raroians harpoon in this way, with much trouble and risk to themselves, are small and insignificant, one may well ask why they persist in it. But they have a reason which is just as good as that of most Sunday anglers here at home; they enjoy the keen sport.

Another kind of spear-fishing which is carried on on the reef is to our minds both more amusing and original - it is done with hunting dog!. The Raroians, as mentioned several times above, keep numbers of dogs, dog's flesh being regarded as a great delicacy (which, in fact, it is). Surprisingly enough, these beasts kept for slaughter have, for several different reasons, had a training which makes them particularly suitable for hunting. Although the Raroians appreciate fat steaks themselves, they find it too much trouble to give their dogs anything to eat. The natural consequence is that the dogs live permanently on the verge of starvation and, in their ravening hunger, often kill fowls and pigs and even one another. One can therefore say without exaggeration that half the dogs on the island are wolves, always on the hunt for something eatable.

But they are just as much seals as wolves. Even as puppies they are

taken on canoe trips and compelled to go for walks round the reef, and thence forward they are so continuously and intimately acquainted with the sea that (if they have not been drowned during the period of apprenticeship) they move as easily in the water as on land.

Presumably it is just this circumstance - that the dogs possess the qualities of wolf and seal at the same time - that has given rise to the cunning method of capture which should properly be called fish-hunting. The huge shelf formed by the outer reef - about fifty yards wide on the lee side and about 450 yards wide on the windward side - is covered at high tide by water a foot or so deep, in which are masses of fish of different kinds. It is useless to try to harpoon them or catch them in any other way without the help of dogs, as they always see the danger in time and dart off much quicker than a man can run. But with the Raroia dogs it is quite another thing. They are as swift as their prey and pursue the fish unwearyingly till they either rush straight towards one of the men who is standing ready with his harpoon or find a hiding-place under a stone or in some cranny, in which case it is, of course, an easy matter to pull them out.

While spear-fishing of all species is carried on all the year round, other methods of capture depend more on the season. The most picturesque of these is undoubtedly *rena* fishing. The Raroians had talked a great deal about this kind of fishing and had explained that the season usually began some time in March, when great shoals of fish came into the creek by the village to play. But it was not till well on in April that we saw the first signs that the shoals of fish were at last on their way.

Larger and larger crowds of gulls began to assemble over the lagoon a mile or two from the shore, and they came nearer every day. One clear still morning, when the lagoon was almost like a mirror, we suddenly heard a cry from the quay below which all immediately took up. A little later our faithful friend Tehei summoned us:

"You must come and see. The whole creek's full of *komene* fish!"

We hurried down to the shore, where all our other friends were already assembled. Fifty yards from the land a white cloud of shrieking gulls hung over a big black patch in the water. It was clearly a gigantic shoal of fish! Despite the savage attacks of the birds the black patch gradually increased in size; in half an hour's time it was as large as a market-place. The time seemed to have come to start *rena* fishing, and Teka gave orders for preparations to be made. To our great astonishment the whole crowd dashed off at once, and in a little while we were alone with Teka.

"Why are they all making off like that?" I asked Teka curiously. "The fishing nets are hung up down here on the beach."

"Wait and see," replied Teka, laughing.

We did not need to wait long before the first to go came back with large bundles of palm-leaves under their arms. By degrees the rest of the villagers returned, and each of them carried at least five large palm-leaves. The heap grew to imposing dimensions.

"Now you'll see how we make a *rena*," said Teka, and slit a palm leaf in two along the central nerve. "A *rena* is much better than a net for catching *komene*."

Then he laid one half on top of the other and took a new leaf. All round us all the Raroians were slitting palm-leaves in two in the same way. In a little while the whole beach was covered with neat little piles, each of five half-leaves. The next stage of the work followed immediately. Our friends collected in sm^ groups and began to fasten the bundles together with fibres and palm leaves. Then they joined the bundles lengthwise.

As soon as a length reached about thirty feet a man caught hold of each end of it and began to wring it much as one wrings water out of a sheet. The natural consequence was that the lobes of the leaves pointed in all directions so that the length looked more like a garland, or a tinsel band on a Christmas tree, than anything else. When all the different groups had done this they began to splice the lengths together to make one single garland, which when completed was some 500 yards long. At last fishing could begin!

Two of the strongest men took hold of one end of the palm garland, and the rest of the Raroians placed themselves along it at equal intervals. Marie-Thérèse and I hastened to follow their example. We waded slowly and cautiously out into the shallow water and approached the shoal of fish. The garland of leaves closed slowly about its prey likc a gigantic green snake. We had soon encircled the leaping mass of herring-like fish. The air was still full of shrieking, fluttering gulls, which followed us closely as we began to wade back to the beach. When we had got into water about four inches deep and had drawn the circle of leaves together to half its original size did they reluctantly fly off.

A few yards from the beach we stopped. The fish were now packed so tightly that they could no longer move, and clearly nothing remained to be done but to scoop them up. To make this work easier the women picked up palm-leaves which had been left over and in a twinkling plaited together handy baskets, while many of the men took off their hats and used them as scoops. Half an hour later a long row of shining silver fish lay on the beach, and the distribution could begin. All collected in a ring, and amid laughter and shouting Teka and Tapakia divided the fish into as many heaps as there were inhabitants of the village. When they had at last

finished we were able to take no fewer than twenty-one fish each!

I need hardly add that all our friends ate up every single fish the same afternoon and next day were looking out hungrily for fresh shoals of *komene*. They did not need to look in vain, for there were plenty of them that day and on the days that followed. My notes show that for over two months we made at least three *rena* expeditions a week, and each time the catch was between 1,000 and 3,000 *komene!*

But the fishing we ourselves liked best was night fishing on the reef. It is the most primitive of all methods of fishing, and my diary describes as follows our impressions and experiences during the first night fishing expedition we took part in on Raroia:

"It is midnight when I write this, and we have just come back to the village with a whole sack full of fish. This must be considered a pretty good result, as we were only four - Putake, Tinorua, Marie-Thérèse and I - and our only equipment consisted of knives and kerosene lamps!

"When our friends came to fetch us immediately after sunset we could not help smiling a little at their optimism in taking a whole copra sack in which to bring back our catch, but in the course of the evening and night we gradually discovered that we had in more than one way underestimated this simple method. It is a way of fishing which is not only astonishingly efficient but also uncommonly full of atmosphere.

"The stars were shining unusually bright and clear, and only a light breeze rustling in the palm-tops, when we set off from the village. Putake walked ahead with the biggest kerosene lamp in the village (the church lamp) which hissed and sang like a coffeepot; next came Marie-Thérèse and I, and Tinorua brought up the rear with the copra sack on his back. Tinorua had taken with him a rusty lamp which refused to function whatever mixture he put into it, and after a time he left it behind under a palm and twisted together a torch of dried palm-leaves.

" Soon the sparks were jumping and flying about our heads like shooting stars, and helped to make the contrast between our little circle of light and the surrounding darkness all the sharper and more obvious. We followed the shore northward at an easy pace. To our left we had the open sea and the encircling reef with its shining white breakers. To our right we had a dark wall of palms. The tide was running out strongly, and here and there on the reef we saw the light reflected in red coral stones which stuck up out of the water. All nature seemed so curiously alive and secretive.

"Putake, understandably enough, soon began to be mildly philosophic and wondered whether paradise looked like Raroia, and if fish or birds were caught from its reef. We replied that we were sure paradise looked like Raroia, but carefully left the remainder of the question unanswered.

"After a good hour's walk we reached the northern end of the island. Here the fishing was to begin, and our intention was to return slowly to the village along the reef. Thus we should get home at once as soon as the fishing was over. Tinorua waded out into the water and looked round him.

" 'The water's begun to rise, but it'll be a little while before the fish come in from the sea to sleep,' he announced when he came back.

"We lit a fire and stretched ourselves out on some palm-leaves round it. Putake

again began to speculate as to what the heavenly paradise looked like, but Tinorua seemed quite satisfied with the earthly paradise we were in at the moment and interrupted him to ask us about something he had been considering for a long time. He wanted to know how it was that Marie-Thérèse and I did not know a single one of the many fish that were in the Raroia lagoon. He himself had come to the conclusion that presumably there were no fish in the *popaa* country.

"Of course we explained that it was because the fish in cold and in warm water were different, just as in fresh or salt water. That there were colder seas than the South Seas he did not find so very surprising, but that there were lakes as big as the Raroia lagoon full of drinking-water both he and Putake refused to believe. But they were still more dumbfounded and amazed when we added that there were no sharks in those lakes.

"The time passed quickly in profound conversation on these and other equally interesting subjects, and it looked as if our friends had completely forgotten that we were really out fishing. I therefore at last reminded them of this as discreetly as possible, but they looked up at the sky and answered smiling; 'You see that star there in the south. When that has gone down below the horizon the fish have gone to sleep. It's no use beginning till then.'

"The star sank by degrees, and we got ready. Marie-Thérèse and I placed ourselves one on each side of Putake, who had the kerosene lamp in one hand and a large knife (not unlike a South American machete) in the other. Tinorua followed ten yards behind us with the sack over his shoulder. We had not got more than a few yards out on to the reef before Putake caught sight of the first fish, asleep in the shallow water. He approached carefully, aimed with the knife and struck. The stunned fish floated up to the surface and was washed in by the tide a little way across the reef. Tinorua seized it at once and dropped it down into the sack.

"It looked easy, and when a little later I caught sight of another fish I approached resolutely with my knife raised. Slightly ashamed of killing a defenceless creature in this mean way, I struck. When the waves had at last subsided and we had all dried the salt water out of our eyes, there was naturally no sign of a fish, Tinorua laughingly explained that I must take care not to let my blade enter the water at an angle, as the water immediately acted as a brake on it.

"I understood all this admirably in theory, and hastened to apply my knowledge in practice to the next fish that appeared. I calculated the angle of attack carefully and exactly, and then let fly for all I was worth. Once again I had no doubt that I had literally struck a rock!

"Some time passed. Putake rapidly passed on half a dozen fish to Tinorua's sack, and I zealously studied his technique. At last I decided to try my luck again and began to look round for a suitable quarry. It was Marie-Thérèse who found it. She suddenly cried, 'Come here, here's a fish for you. It's nearly two feet long. You can't miss.'

"I hurried over to her and saw a long blue fish, no thicker than my finger, lying quite still just below the surface. Marie-Thérèse was right. It was quite impossible to miss, and with a shout of triumph I cut the fish in half. Then I turned round and held up the two halves under Putake's nose, that he might duly admire my capture. But instead of owning himself conquered Putake began to laugh, and soon he and Tinorua were laughing till the tears ran down their cheeks. At last he pronounced the following crushing sentence: 'But, Penetito, that isn't an eatable fish; besides, you've cut it in half. You must strike not with the edge of the blade, but with the back.'

"We went along the reef, and half an hour later I succeeded in executing my first

fish in proper style. Meanwhile Putake and Tinorua had half filled the sack. To my astonishment they let hardly one fish escape, and if ever they happened to miss with the first stroke, they immediately took up the chase. While it was impossible to catch the fish in the daytime without dogs, it was amazingly easy now, in the dark. Those which managed to escape never went farther than ten yards or so and there wailed quietly for their pursuers - who never missed a second time.

"When we got back to the place on the reef right opposite the village where we had started on our night walk a few hours earlier, the sack was still not quite full.

" 'We'll go on a bit farther south,' Tinorua said, as he bit off the neck of a fish and began to chew the raw flesh with enjoyment. 'The sack must be full, or they'll just laugh at us.'

"We all agreed with him. We spent a further half-hour of the mild summer night hitting and splashing in the tepid water, and it was not till Tinorua began to walk in his sleep, and we ourselves were so tired that we just cut holes in the water, that we at last regretfully turned homeward."

In addition to these methods of capture there are of course many others, but they are all considerably less interesting than those I have described. Hooks, for example, are by no means unknown, but in contrast to what we are accustomed to, the Raroians use neither rod, float, nor worm. They hold the line in their hands, and for bait they always use little fish or cuttle-fish meat, (There are, in fact, no worms on the island.) In most cases they fish from the reef or let the line trail behind a canoe more or less as when we use a trolling spoon, but it sometimes still happens that they simply swim about with the line in their hand in the ancient Polynesian manner. The boldest go far out to sea without an accompanying boat, or swim about in the lagoon for hours.

But the best place for all kinds of fishing with hook and line is the entrance to the lagoon. All the year round huge shoals containing fish in thousands pass through the entrance every day, either on their way out of the lagoon or on their way in. The commonest kinds are trigger fishes, jacks, wrasses, and tuna. The Raroians catch huge quantities of these from their canoes, which they anchor in the middle of the entrance or let drift with the stream.

Man cannot live by bread alone, and the Raroians live not only on fish, but also consume great quantities of other sea food. Snails and mussels, which used to figure prominently on the menu, are now seldom eaten, but eels and rock lobsters (a kind of lobster which has no claws) are still esteemed delicacies. Eels are always harpooned in the same way as other fish, and this method of capture is sometimes used for rock lobsters. As a rule, however, the Raroians are unwilling to use the harpoon for them, as it kills them, and they prefer to catch them in another and more cunning way. They make the children frighten them out of their hiding places, and simply put a foot on them when they come running along.

Then there are turtles. In old times the turtle was a sacred animal, and

every good catch was celebrated with religious ceremonies at the *marae*, or tribal place of sacrifice. It naturally lost its special place as a sacred animal long ago, but its flesh still tastes just as good (something like roast veal) and it is therefore still hunted as keenly. There are many different kinds of turtle, the smaller of which are about the size of a motor-car wheel and the larger about as big as a bicycle wheel. Some live in the lagoon, others only in the sea.

To make clear how these turtles, which often weigh over 200 pounds, are hunted, I will try to describe one of the expeditions in which I myself took part. It was at the beginning of June, and one of the first times in the year that any turtles had been sighted. During June and the following months, as a rule they collect on the lee side of the Tuamotu atolls for breeding, and during this period a boy, or a couple of boys, always sit at the look-out point on the beach or in the palm-tops so as to be able to let the men know in time.

But this time it was two girls who ran up quite breathless and declared that they had seen half a dozen black spots in the sea west of the village. All the men hastened to push their canoes into the sea, and I jumped into my friend Tehei's, as had been agreed, as soon as we had succeeded in making our way through the surf. As the sailing canoes are too large and clumsy for turtle-hunting the Raroians use their small open canoes which hold at most three men, and are certainly nothing to make a song about, although they are often compelled to go far out to sea in rough weather. While Tehei and Tara wielded the paddles till they creaked, I had to devote myself to the third man's usual occupation - to bail out the canoe as well as I could with the coconut-shell scoop.

In the bottom of the canoe lay a long supple rope, to one end of which a large iron hook was fastened. This was the entire equipment. But Tehei was soon to have an opportunity of showing what this simple implement could do in skilful hands, for we came upon a turtle after only a quarter of an hour's paddling. In most cases one has to stalk a turtle with care and slowly manoeuvre oneself within range, but this turtle rose suddenly from the depths right under our bows and presented us with a chance.

It naturally disappeared again as soon as it caught sight of the canoe, but Tehei was as quick as the turtle and dived in with the iron hook in one hand and the rope trailing behind him. For a time we could see two dark shadows vanishing into the depths at furious speed; but then they were clean gone, and the only thing we could do was to sit looking at the rope which ran slowly out over the side. Fifteen feet, thirty feet, forty-five feet, sixty feet....

After a minute which seemed an eternity there was a sudden jerk on the rope. This was the signal that Tehei had got the turtle, and we caught

hold of the rope and hauled it in as quickly as we could. Tehei put his head above the surface for a moment to breathe; then he dived again. Slowly but surely we hauled our quarry in, and soon we had the satisfaction of seeing a turtle as large as a cartwheel thrashing violently beside the canoe, the great hook lodged in the side of his throat.

To judge from this description, it certainly looks as if there was nothing very remarkable about catching a turtle, but this is entirely because the course of events is seen from above. For the diver who himself pursues his quarry under water it is by no means as simple and safe. In the first place it is trying to the lungs and heart to dive swiftly to a great depth, and it has happened more than once that the helpers in the canoe have had to haul in an unconscious comrade instead of a turtle. Secondly,there are always plenty of sharks, which on such occasions can easily confuse a turtle with a diver. (Certain sharks are actually capable of biting them both in half.) Lastly, the hook must be placed in the turtle's throat, the only part which is really vulnerable, and at the same time the diver must take good care to keep out of the way of the turtle's jaws. A turtle which has once closed its jaws on a man's hand does not let go till its head - or the man's hand - is cut off.

Even if the diver succeeds in placing the hook in the turtle's throat, this does not mean that all difficulties are over. The turtle has to be got up to the surface, and for this it is not enough just to haul on the rope. Most turtles are strong enough to tear the rope out of the haulers' hands or disappear seaward with the whole outfit, if the diver is not skilful. Only when he has got a good grip of the turtle's shell, and, by turning it on its back and keeping it firmly in this position, prevents it from swimming in the opposite direction, can the creature be hauled up. This, however, means a wrestling bout requiring both courage and strength, and it is a fact that the turtle wins just as often as the diver!

Another, but more difficult method of getting the turtle to the surface is to sit astride it, seize hold of its head, and press one's fingers into its eyes. By forcing the turtle's head upwards one can compel it to rise to the surface itself - if one has the strength in one's hands to hold on long enough, of course. Many declare that the most skilful turtle-hunters in the Tuamotu group, when once they have got their prey up to the surface, can even steer it in to the beach and the earth oven that awaits it. But that is a thing I should like to see before I believe it!

An account of fish life on Raroia would, of course, not be complete without rather more detailed mention of sharks. Both the lagoon and the sea teem with sharks, and I have not yet been on a single fishing expedition without having seen one or more of these brutes. Most of them

are small, from three to six feet long, and make off at once if one splashes in the water a bit, but now and then one comes upon big fellows who seem anything but timid.

I soon noticed that the Raroians' demeanour changed with a change of hunting-ground. While they dive and swim in the creek by the village without the least fear, they are as a rule not particularly inclined to jump in at other places in the lagoon or into the sea, and if they do they always take care to be armed with a sharp knife, I asked Rauri one day to what this difference was due.

"That's easily explained," he replied. "We bathe and fish so often in the creek by the village that the sharks have been scared away. They've learnt that it's dangerous to come in here, and they have got a wholesome respect for men. At other places in the lagoon and in the sea, where people seldom go, they are fool-hardy and go for everything that moves in the water. Strangers more than anyone ought to be careful. The sharks realize that they haven't our knowledge and skill."

"But why didn't you say so before? I've often swum about and fished like all the rest of you."

"Oh, there's no danger for you. You're almost a Raroian."

I asked many other people about the same thing, and always received the same answer. Some added that one ought never to bathe in the company of sharks if one had quarrelled with one's better half. As a melancholy confirmation of the danger they pointed to Titi, who had had one arm bitten off by a shark when she was young, having gone out fishing immediately after a quarrel with her husband. I quietly observed that with my knowledge of Titi's bad temper I should have been much more surprised if she had *not* quarrelled with her husband the day she was bitten by the shark, and my friends at last reluctantly admitted that if this was the real reason both Titi and her husband ought to have been bitten by sharks every time they went out fishing.

They were able to put up a rather better defence for their conviction that sharks attack foreigners by preference - despite my own experience to the contrary - and produced the Chinese merchant as a witness. He told me that he had been on the island for many years without having ever fished or sailed on the lagoon, when one day the villagers persuaded him to go over with his goods to one of the lagoon islands, where they were all staying for the time being. He stowed away in a canoe a sack of flour, a box of canned goods, and a guitar, which one of his customers had ordered, and set off with a couple of young men.

"At first everything seemed to be going well," he continued his story, "but out in the middle of the lagoon the canoe began to shake and tumble in a mysterious way. We leant over the side and saw a big shark, the

biggest I've ever seen, swimming beside the canoe and lashing it with its tail. One of the boys hit it on the nose with an oar, but this only made it more savage and it hurled itself against the canoe as if it wanted to upset it. We tried to get rid of it by changing our course and setting more sail, but it clung to us obstinately and attacked us again. We began to be afraid of its jumping up out of the water and getting its teeth into us, for the canoe was heavily loaded and we were sitting level with the water.

"After a time I had a good idea. If I poured flour into the water, perhaps the shark would be confused and would lose us. So I opened one of the sacks and, with a heavy heart, began to scatter the contents. When I had finished the sea round the canoe was as white as milk, and the shark had disappeared. We felt glad and relieved, but before many minutes had passed it turned up again.

"Now it began to snap at my feet. Curiously enough it paid no attention to the others who were on board; it was just me it wanted to get at. Better throw something at it, I thought. Something hard. But there was nothing hard and heavy on board to throw except the tins of food, and at last I decided to sacrifice them. The shark only seemed to enjoy the bombardment, however, for it continued to pursue and even swallowed several of the tins.

"We had now almost reached the island; it was not more than five minutes' sailing at most. The shark seemed to understand this, for it made fresh and still more violent attacks and kept on leaping out of the water. I thought: There's only one thing left to sacrifice, and that's the guitar. I hesitated for a long time, but at last I flung it straight at the shark's muzzle. It stopped and began to nose at the guitar. Just at that moment we reached the island, and while the shark was swimming round the guitar several times, and lashing it to pieces with its tail, I took the chance of getting ashore.

"That is the only time a shark has ever tried to attack anyone on board a canoe; and there must be some reason why it should have happened just to me. The reason certainly was that I had never fished or sailed in the lagoon like the other men on the island, and that I was therefore a stranger to the sharks."

Perhaps someone may suspect that this is just a fishing story, which one should be careful not to take too seriously. But whatever the explanation may be I think the story is certainly true, for compared with the real fishing stories with which our friends sometimes entertain us the Chinaman's narrative is peculiarly modest. As might be expected, the Raroians' fishing stories, like the fish themselves, are colossal and fantastic; the most exaggerative of our anglers at home has certainly never produced anything approaching them. One single example should be

convincing.

Tapakia returned from fishing one evening with only half a dozen *mu*, a fish so wretched and tasteless that as a rule no one troubles to catch it. All the villagers, of course, at once collected on the quay and began to make humorous remarks at Tapakia's expense. Tapakia was equal to the situation, and without blinking an eyelid related the following story in a serious voice:

"Just as I got to the Pereva shallows I caught sight of a couple of big *tonu* right down on the bottom. I got a line ready, put a bit of cuttlefish on the hook, and cast it. But it had hardly touched the water before a shoal of *mu* came rushing up and flung themselves on the bait. The only thing to do was to haul in the line again and put on a new bit of cuttlefish.

"Then I tried again, and now still more *mu* had assembled, and before I managed to get out more than a few yards of line one of them had taken the hook. I tried yet again, but the result was the same. More and more *mu* came from every direction, and at last they were packed so tight that I could hardly see the big *tonu* down on the bottom.

"I put on a bigger sinker, so that the hook might sink more quickly, but it was no use. The *mu* always managed to swallow the bait before the hook got down to the bottom. I had no more sinkers, but I found a stone in the canoe and put that on as an extra sinker. The result was the same. Then I lost my temper and took the line in one hand and the anchor in the other and jumped in. I sank right to the bottom, and not one *mu* was able even to nose at the hook. While I still had the hook in my hand one of the *tonu* took it and I made haste to get to the surface again. Luckily I had made the line fast to the canoe, and I had now only to haul in the catch.

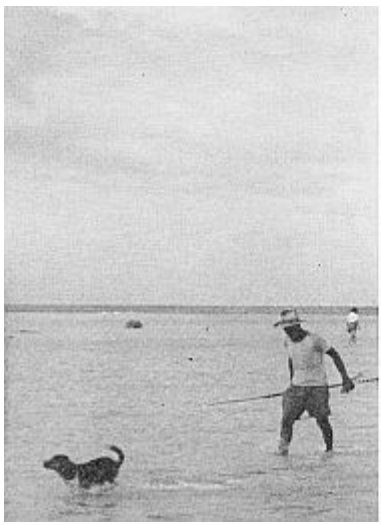
"Just as I was stooping down to catch hold of the line the canoe gave a jerk, and I fell head over heels. When I pulled myself together in a little while I found the canoe was rushing through the water as if it had had an outboard motor. Evidently a shark or some other big fish had swallowed the *tonu*, I thought it would soon get tired or bite off the line and did not worry. But time passed, and the line did not break till after sunset. Of course it was too late then to go on fishing, and that's why the result is so bad."

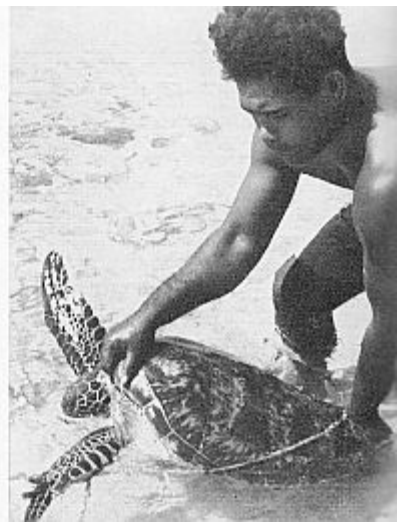
No one had any objection to make. For indeed what objection could be made to so convincing a story? Especially as Tapakia had the *mu* with him as conclusive proof of its truth?

Spear-fishing is a popular sport and the fisherman sometimes keep the first fish on the spear while harpooning others.

Although, Marie-Thérèse had seen amny strange fish at Raroia, she could not help being amused when she picked up this "nosefish."

Harpooning fish on the outer reef requires sharp sight and great agility (*above*). The natives also fish-hunt with dogs (*below, left*). Catching turtle is another sport (*below, right*).





A *rena*, a garland of palm leaves, is used to encircle a shoal of fish and slowly pull it ashore (above). On the beach, after the catch has been brought in, everyone takes his share (*below*).

CHAPTER TEN

The Chinese Invasion

The Chinese in French Oceania - Increasing domination of business - Influenza and measles epidemics - Transport of divers prohibited - An unexpected schooner - Sick passengers landed - Divers' earnings in Chinese pockets - 'Special permit' story disproved - Hu's serious illness - 'Breakdown' compels Chinese to remain - An impudent visitor - Carousing and card-playing - Chinese trickery again succeeds - Housing and food problems - Ravages of measles - Ihi's death and burial - How the story ended

MANY people seem inclined to regard the Chinese as models of wisdom, peaceableness, and humanity. I do not know if the population of China really has all these qualities, but one thing is certain, that the Chinese one meets in French Oceania very seldom live up to this ideal.

The first Chinese were introduced into Tahiti in the 1860's to cultivate cotton, and many remained when their contracts lapsed or their employers went bankrupt. They were not slow to send for relatives from China, and during the following decades fresh Chinese emigrants trickled in without interruption. At the turn of the century they already numbered 1,000, and since then the Chinese population, mainly as the result of a phenomenal birthrate, has increased to nearly 7,000, while the native population has only *doubled* during that time.

The Chinese constitute only an eighth part of the total population of French Oceania, but they have already succeeded in acquiring a great deal of land, and control practically all the retail trade and a large part of the wholesale trade and the schooner traffic. The natives, with their merry and careless nature, shrink from the very idea of shutting themselves up in a shop or an office and unfortunately offer no resistance whatever to Chinese infiltration.

In this connection it would be interesting to know how many firms and shops in French Oceania are really owned and managed by Polynesians - excluding Chinese undertakings with a Tahitian figurehead to give his name to the business. I should not be surprised if they could be counted on the fingers of one hand! Many of the French, other European, and American business men naturally offer resistance, but most often the struggle is too uneven. Through their solidarity, mutual help, their power

over the natives, and endurance (a Chinese shop is open day and night), and their large families which supply free labour, Chinese competition is unfortunately too strong.

A certain amount of legislation has indeed been passed to prevent the Chinese from acquiring more land by trickery and dominating all business, but as long as there are people, Polynesian or white, who are willing to lend their names and act as figureheads these attempts are naturally futile. The most depressing part of the whole story is that while the Chinese formerly had to concentrate their activity in Tahiti, they are now spreading all over French Oceania. On many of the Tuamotu islands the copra trade is already in the hands of unscrupulous Chinese, and a disquietingly large number of the schooners are Chinese-owned. Generally speaking, they have a free hand, as the authorities have difficulty in controlling their activities far from Papeete.

Of course the Chinese merchant on Raroia swindled the islanders and made himself as rich at their expense as his colleagues on other islands, but he was not personally unpleasant and many times gave proof of a certain solidarity with the little community to which he belonged. But one day, when Raroia quite unexpectedly suffered a regular Chinese invasion, we got a taste of what the native population in other places have to put up with from the Chinese. Unfortunately, such episodes are quite ordinary in the Tuamotu group, but I will relate it in detail to give an idea of the power of the Chinese and how they abuse it.

At the beginning of 1951 several epidemics broke out in quick succession in French Oceania, and as was to be expected with a population which lacks even the most elementary notions of hygiene and nursing and, moreover, is gregarious to the point of promiscuity, the epidemics spread with alarming swiftness and had a devastating effect.

The first sickness to reach the Tuamotu group was influenza, and at least a couple of dozen people died, simply from neglect, of course. We on Raroia did our best to keep the fifty infected persons indoors and in bed (this was the only conceivable method of treatment, as naturally we had not penicillin enough for all), and with the help of illustrated papers and a little persuasion we succeeded in getting thorough the epidemic without a single death.

A few months later, just before the diving season was to begin, the next epidemic broke out, and this time it was measles. The authorities immediately prohibited all transport of divers from island to island and postponed the season indefinitely. As we were not expecting any other schooner at the time, this ought to have been enough to prevent the epidemic from spreading to Raroia, and we therefore felt fairly confident of avoiding the new illness.

We were therefore amazed when one day, a week or two after the prohibition had come into force, we suddenly heard the sound of a motor from the outer reef in the neighbourhood of the village. The boys, who always kept a look-out over the sea to westward as soon as a schooner was expected, had for once abandoned their posts, but they now rushed off in a crowd to see what was happening, and soon a chorus of *'Tero...tero. . .tero'* was heard on the outskirts of the village.

Marie-Thérèse and I hurried across to the outer reef and saw a remarkable sight. Under full sail and with her engine at full speed ahead, the schooner *Marara* was passing close along the reef, evidently on her way towards the entrance. Her silhouette seemed to us rather curious, and when we shaded our eyes with our hands and looked more closely, we saw to our amazement that the whole schooner was fully loaded with canoes high up over the cabin roof, and that quantities of parcels, clothes, and blankets were hanging in the rigging. Soon we were able to make out human forms as well, here and there among the canoes, in the ship's boats, on top of the cargo, and even up the mast.

There was no doubt about it. The *Marara* had a full cargo of divers and diving equipment on board. But how did this concern Raroia? The authorities had long ago prohibited all transport for an indefinite period.

"The schooner may already have left an island when the prohibition came into force, and now she's on her way back," the chief suggested.

"Perhaps," I answered, "but if she was only passing she wouldn't come so close to the reef. It looks rather as if she is making for the entrance."

And so she was. Half an hour later she glided into the lagoon and steered straight for the quay by the village. The whole population assembled down on the beach and began a heated discussion as to what should be done.

"It's forbidden to transport divers," said one.

"There are sick persons on board, for certain," said another.

"We've been ill lately and don't want to be ill again," said a third.

"Measles is worse than influenza," said a fourth.

All those who stood round loudly agreed.

The chief proposed that all should go and hide, but as there was no time for this and, for that matter, no one knew where to hide, I proposed another and simpler solution. The chief should meet the supercargo and the sailors on the quay, while the rest of the population remained at a distance. If the schooner had any goods they were to be left on the wharf and no one was to touch them for a week. The chief himself said we could always disinfect with the contents of one of his liquor bottles. The chief was naturally rather unwilling to sacrifice any liquor, but at last agreed to the proposal.

Soon afterwards, the schooner dropped anchor in her usual place just off the quay. The tension was at its height. All was so strangely quiet on board. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, without anyone showing a sign of wanting to launch a boat. Then we suddenly heard a splash. Then another, louder.

"They're throwing the canoes into the sea,' announced one of the villagers who was better placed than we were.

The splashing continued, and soon a dozen canoes lay floating on the waves. A few men jumped into the water and began to tow them towards the land. What on earth did this mean? There was no sense in throwing the canoes overboard if the schooner did not intend to stay. But if she did, why did not the supercargo come ashore to talk to the chief as was customary? The whole thing was suspicious, and at last the inhabitants persuaded the chief that it was his duty to go on board and speak to the captain and the supercargo. He went off reluctantly. When he came back he reported as follows:

"The supercargo says that all the passengers and canoes are to be left here on Raroia. They will stay till the diving season begins next month, when the *Marara* will come back to fetch them and take them to Takume. The supercargo says that he has special permission from the authorities to make this trip in spite of the prohibition. They must have got permission by wireless."

"But aren't there any sick people on board?" asked an anxious mother.

"Oh, yes, crowds, but as they have permission there's nothing to be done. . . ."

This story of a special permit seemed suspicious. How had they set about asking for it? There was no transmitter on board the *Marara*. The only one in the whole Tuamotu group was on Marutea, and the schooner had certainly come from that island. But we listened regularly, on our short-wave wireless on Raroia, to the Marutea station's wireless telephone conversations with Papeete, and we had heard nothing of any such permission. For that matter, how could an exception be made for a schooner in such an important case as this?

Marie-Thérèse and I explained all this to the chief, and he seemed to pluck up courage. While we were talking the ship's boat had at last been launched and was quickly filled with men, women, and children.

"Don't let them land," we said to the chief, and at the same time we urgently warned our other friends to keep at a distance. They all agreed with us and promised to do their best. No one would go near the infected passengers, never, never!

Five minutes later, of course, all the passengers in the ship's boat were in the inhabitants' arms, and to demonstrate their joy at the unexpected

meetings, they all embraced and kissed one another repeatedly.

"You see, they are all our relations. We should have been ashamed not to receive them properly. Besides, none of them are ill," all our friends declared with one voice, when they saw our reproachful looks.

The first boat-load of passengers certainly did not look very ill, but soon another came, and this time the passengers were a considerably more depressing sight. They all had swollen red faces - and anything redder than a Polynesian with measles it would be hard to find; many had high temperatures and were so weak that they could not walk without help. Like the earlier passengers, they all disappeared in the direction of the water-tanks and the shop as soon as they had thoroughly infected all who came in their way.

The damage was done already, and as we felt sorry for the wretched people we walked round to see if we could do anything to help them. At the village tank the precious water was running in floods. Of course it was foolish of the sick people to bathe, but we understood them. They had spent a fortnight on board and had only had two pints of water each a day, i.e. barely as much as they needed for cooking. The shop was full of people, all wanting to buy condensed milk. Hot milk is regarded as an infallible cure for most sicknesses.

"But is there no milk on board?" I asked in surprise. "The Chinese schooners are usually well supplied."

"Yes," replied a pregnant woman with a skinny child in her arms, "but it's in the hold and the supercargo won't let it be brought up. It's too much trouble for the little it can bring in. The supercargo's a Chinese, you understand. He wouldn't even let the cook give the sick people hot water on the voyage."

A short way off stood a little group of men, who all had a hopeless, crushed appearance. I asked them what was the matter with them.

"We've got no more money," one of them said hopelessly.

"But what have you done with all the money you earned by diving for mother-of-pearl?"

"Oh, we've bought food in the Chinese shops. It's dear, and when one's diving one's hungry and wants to eat the nicest things - tinned peaches, salmon, biscuits, and so on."

I knew very well that this was not the full explanation, and so I pressed them a little further.

"Of course we've bought many useful things too," one of them said proudly, "I've got five silk antimacassars and an iron bed which they say comes all the way from Peretane [England], and that man's got a gilded pendulum clock. It doesn't go very well, but it's pretty to look at."

It came out by slow degrees, of course, that they had gambled with the

Chinese on the island and, of course, had lost. A hasty computation showed that the result of the recently concluded diving season on Marutea was about 300 tons of mother-of-pearl. At 30 francs per kilo, this represented earnings of no less than 9,000,000 francs ($144,000) for the divers.

If they had all been as thoughtless as these poor wretches - and there was no reason to think they had not - the diving must have been very good business indeed for the Chinese, especially as the Papeete price was 50 francs per kilo. Nor, knowing what the Chinese were like in money matters, could there be any doubt that the greater part of it had gone into their pockets.

I gradually succeeded in also finding out the reason for the sudden invasion of Raroia, and began to understand what had happened. About a fortnight earlier the *Marara* had arrived at Marutea to fetch 'her' divers and their families, who had been waiting for a long time to be taken home. These divers had all, as is the rule, a contract with the owner of the *Marara* assuring them free transport home as soon as the diving season on Marutea was over.

But for various reasons, best known to the *Marara's* Chinese owner, several months passed before the schooner appeared to fetch them. Almost all the divers were tired or ill and wanted to return home at once, but as most of them had run through their money, the *Marara's* owner succeeded in persuading a large number of them to go on diving for him on another island. The remainder, however, he faithfully promised to put ashore on their respective islands.

Just as the *Marara* had left Marutea a wireless message came saying that an epidemic had broken out and that all transport of divers was prohibited. As a further confirmation of this news measles broke out on board at the same time, the disease having been unknowingly taken on board when the vessel left Papeete.

Instead of returning to Marutea or steering for Tahiti, where there was a possibility of looking after the sick persons, the *Marara's* owner naturally preferred to go on to his original destination. Of course he understood that by so doing he would spread the disease, but why lose money and time out of consideration for the natives? The authorities were a long way off, and as soon as the divers were well again they would, with their usual thoughtlessness, forget the whole business. He was an experienced fox and knew their mentality well. So the *Marara* steered for the nearest mother-ofpearl island, Hikueru.

Here, however, the Chinese met with a disappointment. The chief had sufficient authority and support from the population to be able to prevent the *Marara's* passengers from landing. The prohibition of the transport of

divers before the season began was clear and had been repeated several times by wireless, and the chief emphatically declared that if anyone tried to infringe it he would report it at once to the authorities.

The supercargo learned his lesson at once and made a new plan. There was clearly no point in trying to disembark the passengers on one of the mother-of-pearl islands, where diving took place regularly. On these islands the chief and inhabitants would certainly be as experienced and energetic as on Hikueru. But on one of the many other islands a coup ought to be successful - especially if an island was chosen where the chief was a man of less energy.

The chief of Raroia, who also had listened to the passengers' stories and complaints, now at last began to understand that he had been tricked and called a council to discuss what ought to be done. To our delight it was decided to act resolutely and demand that the owner should go to Papeete at once with all his passengers.

When, therefore, at long last the owner of the *Marara* came ashore, he was met on the quay by a strong committee.

"How can you disembark sick passengers in this way in spite of the prohibition?" the chief began. "It will certainly be a long time before the diving season begins, and the passengers may have to stay here for several months. There's no room for them, and what are they to eat and drink? The water tank only just provides for us, and there's only food for a few weeks ahead in the shops."

The Chinese listened attentively, and nodded agreement once or twice.

"If you have any difficulties over food supplies I might be able to help you," he proposed. "I haven't much on board myself, but in this case of course I---"

"It isn't a case of food supplies," a keen-witted person interrupted him, clearly realizing that the conversation had got off the trade. "It is forbidden to transport divers from one island to another before the season begins, and no one knows when that will be."

"But my dear fellow, I have a special permit," the Chinese replied, looking in astonishment from one face to another.

"How did you manage to get it?" I asked impatiently.

The Chinese jumped when he suddenly saw a *popaa*, and this time he had no need to feign astonishment.

"Why, you understand, by wireless, permission by wireless ... don't you know there's wireless on Marutea?"

"Yes," I said, "but you had already left Marutea when the prohibition was issued. How could you be so far-sighted as to ask for an exemption long before it came into force? Besides, I haven't heard anything about your case on the Marutea wireless."

‘ "H’m, I don't know. I don’t run the wireless. The captain does. You'd better ask him."

We asked the captain, who put the responsibility on to someone else, who in turn referred us to a third person who could not be found. Our friends recovered their courage, and some of them even accused the Chinese of lying, which, curiously enough, he very much resented.

The battle seemed to be won, however, and after a prolonged discussion and incoherent talk with the captain and supercargo the latter told us that they must have ‘misunderstood’ the wireless message and that the *Marara* would proceed to Papeete at once. (In other words, the Chinese certainly intended to attempt the same coup on another island, where there were no white people and the chief was even more credulous than on Raroia.) We breathed sighs of relief and began to distribute aspirin for the coming journey to all who wanted it.

We should have liked to be present at the embarkation of the passengers and the *Marara's* actual sailing, but just at that moment we were called to Kataha’s house. Ihi, a girl of twenty, was, we were told, seriously ill. One look was enough to tell us that something was seriously wrong. She had a high temperature, was thin and hollow-eyed, and breathed heavily with a wheezing noise.

We guessed, of course, that it was inflammation of the lungs, and in reply to our questions she told us that she had lately returned from the interior of the island, where she had spent a week in a tumble-down hut. As if to confirm our theory she added that she had a pain in her side which pricked like pins. We gave her an injection of penicillin and told her to stay in bed and wrap herself up well.

When we returned we saw, to our astonishment, Temake’s kitchen full of Chinese. They were busy cooking and evidently felt completely at home. Two of them were rummaging among the pots and saucepans, while some others were lighting the fire and a third group were opening preserve tins. The woman of the house had been sent by them to fetch water.

Temake's living-room swarmed with Chinese women, presumably the business men’s wives, and they were making themselves as much at home as the men, to say the least. Some were performing their toilets in front of a mirror, while others had found a smoothing iron and were pressing their clothes. In Temake’s fine bed, which no one ever dared touch, lay a stout matron with three children.

"What in the world are all these Chinese doing in your house?" I asked Temake in astonishment. "The schooner was to leave at once and take all the passengers with her."

"Well, you see," said Temake, wriggling, "the motor’s broken down.

So they must all stay till it's repaired. The Chinese here are merchants who've had business on Marutea, and as they offered their services, I thought it was a good idea to let them cook the food. There's nothing so good as Chinese dishes, as you know."

"Oh, I see, but who's paying for all the canned goods?"

"Well, I am, but, you see, they're cooking the food for nothing."

Anyone who has spent a few weeks on board a schooner will certainly want some other food than canned food, and soon the Chinese gang was all over the village in search of fowls, geese, pigs, and fruit. The rest of the villagers at least tried to be a little warier than Temake, and asked high prices for everything. A goose, which in ordinary circumstances was sold for 150 francs, shot up to 400, a fowl commanded 200 francs, and so on. But the Chinese did not seem to attach any importance to prices; they only laughed, pulled fat bundles of notes from their pockets, and paid.

In regard to bread-fruit and papaya they encountered for the first time some slight resistance. No one, understandably enough, was willing to part with such rare delicacies (the only fruits to be found on the island, by the way), but this time again, of course, the Chinese hit on a cunning method of gaining their object. They distributed chewing gum liberally to all the children, and promised a few more packets to each child if they could get them the fruits they desired. The Raroians could certainly have withstood a Chinese attack, but they were naturally powerless against plundering by their own children, and soon the Chinamen's sacks were full of bread-fruit and papaya.

"They did us out of the fruit, but at any rate they had to pay dear for the fowls and geese," said Taipuhia, trying to make the best of the situation.

But I had seen something of Chinese methods before, and was not quite convinced that the Raroians had triumphed finally even in the case of the poultry.

On our return to our house we found an uninvited visitor. A young Chinese was walking about brazenly in our bedroom.

"Nice house this,' he said on catching sight of us, "I think I'll rent it."

"You may think so," I said. "But we live here, and anyway it might be best to ask the owner first before you decide to rent a house."

He changed his tone at once and humbly begged my pardon. He sat down on a chair without asking permission, but nevertheless he clearly found it difficult to give up his first idea, for his eyes continued to wander searchingly round the walls. They rested on a map of the Tuamotu group.

"Fine," he said, taking a note-book from his pocket. "I'll take the opportunity and make a sketch of Hao. I've got some land there,"

"How can you have land there?" I asked. "Why, no Chinese or any

other foreigners can own land."

"Oh, the deeds are in the name of a native. Haven't you any land here yourself?"

"No, I'm an honest foreigner." By this time my tone was decidedly cooler.

"H'm, but then what do you do here? Do you do business?"

"No, I don't do any business."

But this was beyond his understanding, and he smiled incredulously. Then he looked round again and had a fresh try.

"What rent do you pay?" he asked.

"It's no business of yours," I replied, "but if you want to know, we pay nothing."

He stared at me round-eyed.

"You see, we are not here to exploit the people on the island," I tried to explain, in a vague hope of being able to make him understand a philosophy of life a little different from his own. "We're here because our friends invited us to come and see them. The owner of this house lends it to us because he is our friend. In return we do him services and now and then give him presents in return. That's a good Polynesian custom. When one comes to a country one must follow its customs."

He listened attentively and at last evidently thought he had understood, for he suddenly burst out:

"Yes, that's right. The natives here are stupid. It's easy enough to trick them into giving things for nothing. But you ought to do business; there are great possibilities here in the Tuamotu group."

Without asking permission he suddenly pulled a book out of my bookshelf. It was an anthropometric book in English with long tables giving the head and body measurements of different Polynesian racial groups.

"Aha," he said, "a price list. Let me see, I understand American. It's much more important to know that than French."

He studied the book, but, comprehensibly enough, could not make out what goods it dealt with. At last he gave it up and resumed the conversation, this time in English.

"France no good. America very good. In America you make business. No difficulty. Here many papers. Ah, America, but you can't go to America."

His face grew sad, and he began to take out books at random and turn over the pages backwards and forwards with his dirty fingers. That was more than I could stand.

"That'll do," I said. "Clear out."

He smiled propitiatingly and began to move towards the door. He

stopped on the threshold.

"Look, haven't you any old weekly papers to give me? With pictures of women in them...."

If I had had any weekly papers I would have flung them at his head.

The evening came and still the *Marara* had not left. Ihi was worse, and when we went to give her the next injection she was delirious. To our astonishment we found that her clothes were cold and wet. We asked those present for explanations. After much coaxing the truth came out at last. As she had pain in her chest, they had made cold water compresses to ease the pains.

"She's put cold compresses on her chest for several weeks, but it doesn't seem to do any good," one of her friends said naively.

"Several weeks? Has she had pain in her chest as long as that?"

By degrees we learnt the whole story. About a month before Ihi had been at a party at which methylated spirit mixed with hair oil had been drunk, and since then she had continually had pain in her chest. It need hardly be added that it was a Chinese supercargo on board another schooner who had sold the spirit, although he, of course, understood quite well what it was to be used for. It has happened more than once that unscrupulous supercargoes not always Chinese, it must be said - have sold more than the permitted quantities of methylated spirit, and that natives have died as a result of similar drinking bouts.

We did the only thing possible; that is, we gave Ihi a fresh injection and recommended absolute rest. This was unfortunately a quite futile recommendation, for the inhabitants had already started a huge carouse, and bawling and singing filled the air. It was, of course, the doing of the Chinese, who had begun to sell smuggled drink as usual at 600 francs a bottle. I could not help thinking of Taipuhia and other villagers, who had so proudly declared when selling the fowls that this time it was the Chinese who had been cheated. This was all the more naive seeing that several of the Chinese had already begun playing cards, which naturally did not stop till the Raroians had lost their last centime.

Next day most of the Raroians began to have second thoughts, and as they grew more sober they became, to our great delight, really savage. They demonstrated so violently against the *Marara's* owner and supercargo that the 'breakdown' was suddenly and miraculously repaired and they began to get the schooner ready for sailing. All the passengers were assembled down on the quay, and when at last all the Chinese dealers came along in a party, both we and the Raroians began to draw sighs of relief. Without a goodbye to anyone, or a word of excuse, the whole gang got into the ship's boat, which left the quay loaded to the bulwarks.

We saw them reach the schooner and clamber on board. Then suddenly the motor began to spit, and before we could look round the anchor was up and the schooner on her way out of the lagoon, leaving behind all the divers and their families.

But these poor people were not all the *Marara* had left behind. A huge heap of corrugated iron lay in Temake's yard, and various other goods were spread around in the grass.

"You understand," our merchant friend explained, "this is iron which they're going to reload when the *Marara* comes back. The supercargo is afraid of a new world war beginning. When the last world war broke out the Government confiscated all goods, rationed them, and fixed the price. So he daren't take the iron back to Papeete, but would rather leave it in safety here, also petrol and a lot of other things."

I understood perfectly. But why on earth had the supercargo left behind a kerosene iron, a piece of silk cloth, a photograph frame, a hat, a soup tureen, and a lot of other rubbish? Temake's explanation was illuminating:

"Those are things I bought on board."

"How much did you pay?"

"I don't know, the accounts are so complicated."

"Didn't you buy any more useful things?"

"Oh, yes - flour, canned goods, cigarettes, and wooden shoes."

"Wooden shoes? Who's going to buy wooden shoes here on Raroia? Everyone goes bare-footed on week-days, and for Sundays they want smart leather shoes."

"The supercargo wouldn't give me any flour unless I took the wooden shoes as well. There are only two dozen pairs."

"H'm, and you don't know how much you've paid?"

'No, but really I haven't paid anything. They took my copra and it worked out all square. I'm quite satisfied."

The divers and their families who had been left behind were considerably less satisfied. Most of them had been away more than five months and longed to get home. They were now condemned to stay on Raroia for an indefinite time until the was pleased to come back and take them home in accordance with the contract. Of course they could take another schooner at their own expense - if one appeared, contrary to all expectation - but this was an uncertain solution, and moreover they had not enough money left.

Even worse was that there was nowhere for them to live on Raroia. Only in a few cases would the Raroians receive them into their houses, and the schoolmistress, as can well be understood, firmly refused to let them occupy the communal school-house. The consequence was that they

had to settle down as best they could in provisional houses made of galvanized iron and palm leaves on the outskirts of the village. It need not be said that this did not help to accelerate the recovery of the invalids.

For the Raroians too this unexpected increase in the population presented a serious problem. The canned goods available were roughly sufficient, but the drinking-water situation was not so good, and it would now have to be rationed. Another serious problem was that of coconuts. With the prevailing copra prices it meant a heavy loss if fifty people each took a few nuts from the trees every day. The Raroians, therefore, would not give them free, and the divers on their side neither would nor could pay for them, and began to steal on the quiet. The consequence was that the Raroians remained in the village to guard their trees instead of going off into the interior of the island to make copra, as they had planned to do. They lost money and time into the bargain and began to be irritated at continually coming across total strangers stealing nuts. Several fights took place.

But the real catastrophe did not occur until a few weeks later, when the measles epidemic began to rage in earnest. Incapable of understanding that a disease could be contracted simply by contact, when no immediate result was seen, the islanders had recklessly associated with all the sick persons whom the *Marara* had left behind.

We knew from experience that it was useless to try to isolate the side people, and we therefore did the only possible thing: we endeavoured to organize patrols to go round the village and see that the patients stayed indoors, wrapped themselves in blankets, and drank something hot. Despite this we daily met sick people on the beach in the strongest wind, and their regular explanation was this:

"We tried to stay indoors as you told us to, but that's a bad way. We felt as if we were being suffocated. We feel much better out here in the wind. We can breathe here."

At last what we had long feared happened: Ihi caught the measles. Her condition, already very critical, became rapidly worse, and it became obvious to all that she would not recover. Her friends' reaction when they realized this was very curious.

"She can't stay here any longer," they declared with one voice. "If she dies here, everyone will think it’s our fault."

"Nonsense," I protested. "Everyone knows that you've done your best to look after her."

"That won’t be any good. Everyone will certainly think it’s our fault. Perhaps we'll be punished too. She’d better go."

"But she can’t even raise herself up, and she’s nowhere to go."

"That may be, but in any case we won’t have her here with us any

longer."

We tried to find someone who was willing to take her in, but we found no one. Unlike most of the other islanders Ihi was Tahitian, and had no relations. She had been adopted when she was little by a woman from Raroia; but this woman had married a man from another island and gone away. Ihi stayed behind on Raroia with her 'husband', but since this cohabitation, and several later ones, had ended in separation, she had led a nomad existence, living now in one household and now in another - which shows one of the few disadvantages of the illegal system of adoption so widely practised.

The only solution of the problem we could find was that all the Raroians in turn should come and help to look after Ihi, in which case they would all, according to their own ideas, be equally responsible - and after a little persuasion they agreed to this. It need hardly be added that this was only a theoretical solution to quiet their consciences. In reality no one bothered about her at all. They had all still got plenty of smuggled drink and it was all they could do to look after themselves. But the most important result had been achieved: Ihi's friends let her stay with them.

We did our best, but no care and no medicine could help Ihi any longer, and she died a few days later in terrible suffering. Whether the internal trouble caused by tho methylated spirit, the cold compresses, or the measles were the main cause of this catastrophe it is, of course, impossible to determine, but one thing is certain that it was a quite unnecessary and senseless death, like so many others in the Tuamotu group at the same time!

Of course Ihi had not left a centime, and naturally no one offered to pay for a coffin for her. The chief hit upon an unusually shrewd and just solution. He decreed that all the men who had lived with her should contribute a sum of money, and the result was that Ihi got the most beautiful coffin which had been seen on Raroia for a long time.

The wake took place on the following night, as is customary on Raroia. Ihi lay in her fine coffin in the middle of the mortuary under a roof of gaily coloured pieces of cloth, and behind her head a few more bright-coloured blankets were spread on the wall. The whole population, including all the strangers, had gathered round, and with one of the catechists leading the singers the hymns followed one another in rapid succession.

Nevertheless, everything was not as usual. While in ordinary cases those present came and went freely and formed small groups here and there inside and outside the mortuary to exchange ideas and discuss the funeral arrangements, now all sat apathetically staring straight in front of them, and, what was even more curious, many did not even take part in

the singing. Nor were any coffee or eatables served, as is always done at funerals.

This difference in the atmosphere was, of course, due to the fact that nearly all those attending the funeral were ill. Many had high temperatures, others coughed and groaned unceasingly, and several lay absolutely silent and motionless, as if they had fallen into a trance. The measles had spread in a terrifying manner, and this would certainly not be the last burial. I do not know if it was this that was disturbing those present at the funeral, if they were fearfully asking themselves whose turn it would be next, or if they simply had not the strength left to trouble themselves about the outside world, but in any case I have seldom formed part of such a painfully depressing assembly.

When at last dawn came, all were so exhausted and helpless that we had the greatest difficulty in scraping together half a dozen men capable of acting as grave-diggers and bearers.

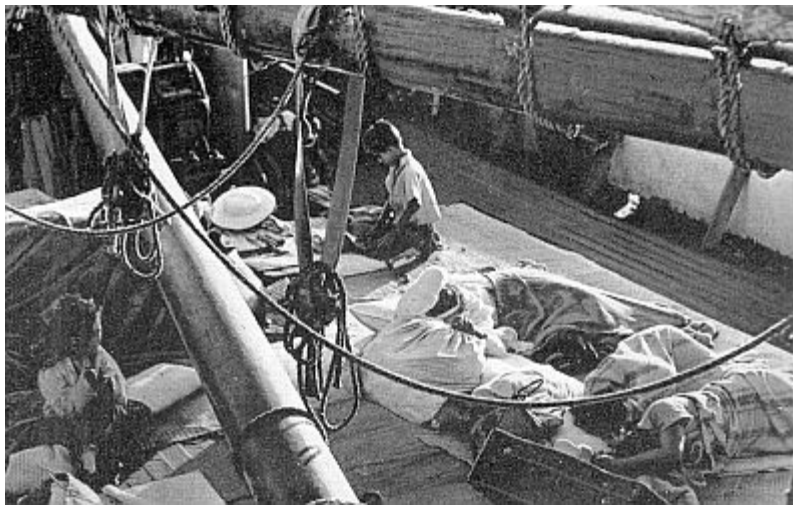
This quiet continued to prevail for a long time - broken only by a few similar funerals - and but for the tragic aspect of it we should have found it refreshing after the noise, carousing, and fighting of the past weeks. By degrees, but very, very slowly, the patients began to regain health, but many weeks after the *Marara's* disgraceful visit there were still plenty of convalescents.

The end of the story? Of course everything went exactly as the Chinese had intended. When at last the *Marara* returned several months later and the postponed diving for mother-of-pearl was started, all the divers were so penniless and so tired of Raroia that all of them, even those who earlier had been most homesick, hastened to sign a fresh contract with the *Marara's* owner.

Another important cause of this success for the Chinese was his declaration that he 'unfortunately' had no opportunity of sending any of the people home, so that they had no choice but to start diving again.

The most distressing part of all this is not that Raroia was once unlucky enough to suffer a Chinese invasion, but that the worthy islanders are so thoughtless that they have quite certainly forgotten their lesson; the Chinese, therefore, will return and perhaps in the end establish a domination over them, as they have done, unfortunately, on so many other islands in French Oceania.

The Chinese, who control most of the retail trade, are slowly spreading over the Tuamotu atolls.



Natives with the measles lie on the Chinese schooner's deck.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Money in the Sea

The Pearl Islands - Mussel lagoons - Out to sea in a canoe Two Raroians adrift - Tohei's adventure - A gay assembly dizzy prices - Visit to the sea-bottom - Diving at a hundred feet - Female competition - Fighting for the take - Remarkable daily earnings - A death - A comical sickness - Diving dresses boycotted - Pahoa's story - How the mussels came back - Cultivated pearls - A tempting invitation - A week of merrymaking - A lively schooner - Home again

IN THE copious romantic and sentimental South Sea literature the Tuamotu atolls are called 'the pearl islands'. This name undeniably had a certain justification a hundred years ago, but nowadays it is no longer correct. The time when a diver was dissatisfied if he did not find at least one or two pearls as large as beans for every dozen mussels he opened is long past, and in our day it is the exception to find a more or less fully developed pearl.

The cause is quite simply that the mussels are now collected for their own sake to a considerably greater extent than before, and consequently are never left in peace long enough for a decent pearl to be formed. While the mother-of-pearl trade has advanced tremendously in the last lew years, Tuamotu pearls have almost disappeared from the market.

Not even the rather more modest, but for South Sea romantics almost as satisfying, name of 'mother-of-pearl islands' is particularly appropriate. On most of the seventy-eight Tuamotu islands there are few mussels or none, and only on half a dozen of the islands are there such quantities that it is worth while to dive for them regularly. This uneven distribution is due mainly to the fact that mother-of-pearl mussels are most individual and sensitive organisms, and only thrive and develop under quite ideal conditions which are not found everywhere. This will probably be best explained by an account of the mother-of-pearl mussels being highly sensitive under ideal conditions not found everywhere in the Tuamotus.

In contrast to the oyster, the mother-of-pearl embryo is not developed in the mother mussel, but instead floats about in the water. The embryos, one twenty-fifth of an inch long, are at first quite unprotected, which, of course, makes them an easy prey for fish and greatly reduces their numbers. The first condition for an increase of mussels in a lagoon is that

the lagoon shall be comparatively poor in fish.

But even more fatal than the ravages of fish are the tidal currents, which often carry the floating organisms far out to sea, where naturally they are destroyed or vanish into the depths. Thus a good result can be hoped for only on the islands which have a complete, or almost complete, coral ring, and it is significant that on all the richest mother-of-pearl islands there are no gaps in the reef. (A further advantage for the divers is, of course, that on these islands there are no sharks in the lagoons.)

If the young mussel remains and continues to develop in the lagoon, it gradually forms a shell and sinks to the bottom. If it lands on a hard coral shoal it attaches itself firmly and grows quickly. If, on the other hand, it lands on a sand or clay bottom, it is lost and soon dies. In this way a further large number of islands are eliminated as suitable breeding-places for the mussels.

Even a completely enclosed island with a firm coral bottom is not always rich in mussels. These require a continuous circulation of water and a certain depth. Many islands which form an unbroken ring of coral are too high for the waves to be able to wash into the lagoon oven at high tide. The mother-of-pearl mussels cannot thrive under such conditions. If the water is less than fifteen feet deep, the difference between the day and night temperatures is too great for the sensitive mussels.

As Raroia has not only a lagoon abounding in fish and an entrance with a strong current, but also a sandy bottom to the lagoon, so that it does not satisfy any of the three most important conditions, it is not surprising that the island is poor in mother-of-pearl mussels. On the neighbouring island of Takumo, on the other hand, the conditions are quite ideal and the Raroians regularly emigrate to Takume in crowds during the diving season, which is usually several months in the year.

Not long ago, when the season was approaching once more, all the villagers were seized by a vehement desire to travel, and left all their occupations. Of course Marie-Thérèse and I, true to our determination to see and experience everything that our friends did, decided to accompany them as usual.

The shortest distance between Raroia and Takume is only three or four miles, but the sailing distance from the gap in the reef on Raroia to Takume village is considerably longer, about twelve miles. As the Raroians have no other vessels but the small light lagoon canoes - 15 to 25 feet long and 3 feet broad - a trip to Takume is a quite daring enterprise, and they only go out to sea when the weather is particularly calm and favourable. Thus we too had to wait for more than a week before the wind went round into the south-east and dropped sufficiently for our flotilla to risk an attempt.

As on many other canoe expeditions, we preferred this time also to make the trip with our faithful friend Tehei, and when the little squadron left the village we were sitting in our usual place on the oitrigger-arm of his blue-and-yellow canoe *Araimoana*, while he himself hung over the tiller aft and his wife lay on her stomach in the bows keeping a look-out for coral shoals. Small waves splashed playfully against the bows, and the canoe floated safe and steady on the faintly rippled water of the lagoon.

But hardly had we been swept out through the entrance, close behind the leading boat, Tepuka's fast sailer *Turia*, when our canoe began to jump and dance like a thing possessed. We had been caught by the powerful eddies outside the reef, and for a long time the canoe spun round like a runaway merry-go-round, till at last, with the aid of the paddles, we managed to work our way out of the danger zone.

Although we were now flying along the reef at a safe distance from all breakers and currents, the voyage was a good deal less quiet and safe than we had expected. Certainly the wind was still moderate when we were still under the shelter of the land, but the water was very much rougher than the lagoon inside and, moreover, heavy swells came rolling across the sea at regular intervals.

The canoe was tossed about violently, and now and then there was an ominous cracking noise from the outrigger boom. The waves often washed over the deck, and suddenly one of the hatch covers broke loose. Before we could put it on again a gallon or two of sea water had splashed down into the hold. Telrei laughed and declared that it was nothing to worry about; he added, presumably to reassure us, that these misadventures were mere trifles compared with the difficulties we should encounter when we came out into the open sea.

Unfortunately he proved to be right, for we had hardly entered the wide strait which separates the two islands when the canoe began to lurch so violently that we had the greatest difficulty in keeping ourselves on board. The waves were as high as the canoe and washed over us every other minute. I began to feel a trifle uncomfortable. Nor did I feel any better when I got a chance to look round a little between two douches of salt water and discovered that Tehei was steering north-east, right out towards the open sea.

"Where are you going?" I bellowed at him. "Don't you see that Takume is much farther north?"

"Yes, I do," he yelled back. "But there's a strong westerly current here between the islands which we must look out for."

I meditated on this fact for a long time in silence and tried to calculate where we should end up if we missed Takume. As I did not carry the whole map of the Tuamotus neatly printed in my head, I gave it up at last

and asked Tehei, in an interval between two seas, what would happen to us in such a case.

"It's best not to miss Takume," he replied. "Tara and Kainui were rather careless once, and their canoe was caught by the current. Before they could stop it they were far out to sea, and soon both Raroia and Takume had disappeared below The horizon. A squall broke the mast off, and they began to drift helplessly before the sea. They drifted for two days before they sighted an island. As it looked as if the canoe would drift past they left it and swam to land. It took them half a day to get there."

Tehei was certainly right. If we did not want to drift about for two days and swim for half a day, it was best not to miss Takume. We clung to the outrigger-boom so tightly that our knuckles grew white, and let Tehei steer on out towards the empty horizon, I do not know what he did, but after we had been bumped and soaked and shaken for over two hours as if we were in a washing-machine, he at last managed to steer the canoe into the shelter of the Takume reef. Three of the other canoes from Raroia had already arrived, and the rest were not far behind. They had all had a good dusting, but no one was in the least agitated.

"Oh, it was nothing this time," said Tehei, as, safe and cheerful, we continued our sail along the reef. "I remember once going from Takume to Raroia in a storm. I had the whole family with me, and everyone on Takume said we should come to grief. However, I started. The wind was so strong that we had to lie down on the deck, and the seas so heavy that the whole lot of us were nearly washed overboard.

"At last I made my wife and the children crawl down into the hold, and I jumped overboard and held on tight to the rudder. As luck had it, the wind was blowing straight for Raroia and we were carried up high on to the reef. When I opened the hatch my wife and the children had fainted. That may have been because there was no air left, for when they had lain on ihe shore a little while they came to."

"Our Lord is the protector of all fools," I attempted to say in my best Tuamotuan, but Teliei did not understand me. I therefore contented myself with asking why in the world he had started on such an idiotic voyage. His reply was typically Polynesian:

"Well, you see, a friend of mine on Raroia was having a birthday party and, of course, I didn't want to miss a chance of a party like that."

After a short search Tehei found a narrow gap in the reef and rode in through it on the back of a huge wave. The moment the canoe bumped against the coral bottom we jumped out and took a firm grip of it to prevent it from following out with the backwash. Then we waded slowly to land and pulled the canoe up on to the beach.

Pahoa, a relative of our good friend Temake, was waiting for us a little

way along the beach in the shade of some bushes. Although we had never seen him before he greeted us as long expected friends and immediately accompanied us to the village to help us settle in. The changes since our last visit were astounding. On a lightning visit paid with *Teretai* we had found a tumble-down village with about fifty sleepy Polynesians. Now, on the contrary, the village streets were teeming with people, and we saw shops and bars everywhere through the palm-trunks.

In an open place a party of gaily dressed men and women were dancing to gramophone music, in one corner a Chinese had set up a wheel of fortune, and we heard the rumbling and grating of wireless sets from many temporary tents and palm-leaf houses. Bicycles lay in heaps under the palm trees, and down on the shore of the lagoon a hundred canoes and four motor-boats rocked on the water.

The most original sight, however, was a newly built wooden house with a large open veranda furnished in the best style of the 1880's, with bright red plush-covered furniture, ornamented cupboards, carved tables, and sofas with crocheted antimacassars. An ingenious business man had found a new and quick method of enriching himself at the cost of the Tuamotu natives; according to his own account the demand was so great that he had made a trip to Paris to buy up old furniture at auction.

"They're a pretty strange collection, as you see," said Pahoa, smiling, when we had completed our round tour and at last sat round a 'restaurant table' consisting of an inverted wooden box. "But they're certainly not all here yet, for the diving season only started a fortnight ago. At present I should think there are only about three hundred divers on the island, and we usually have about five hundred. Most of them are not professional divers, but adventurous Tuamotuans and Tahitians who dream of earning a fortune quickly. They earn a lot of money all right, but as a rule they spend every centime on drink or dissipate it in some other way, and go home again as poor as when they came.

"Of course crowds of other people come besides the divers relations, assistants, shopkeepers, prostitutes, recruiters, buyers, and boat-owners - all of whom have the same dream of getting rich quickly and sometimes make it a reality. Only some of these secondary figures are Polynesians. For example, we now have ten shops on the island owned by Chinese. All the bakers, about a dozen of them, are Chinese too.

"Then we have the recruiters. They are most often Europeans, former sailors and adventurers who go round to all the Tuamotu islands months before the season begins and persuade the natives to go with them to Takume and other mother-of-pearl islands and dive for them. They generally pay for the journey there and back, and in return the natives promise not to sell their mother-of-pearl to any other person. Last come

the buyers, who rank highest; they are French or Chinese, and as many of them also own schooners they dominate the trade entirely.

"The market has always been unsteady," Pahoa continued, "as mother-of-pearl is a luxury article and one dependent on fashion. In the years after the first world war, for example, the demand was tremendous, but right through the 'thirties it was impossible to find any buyers even long after the depression was over. During the last war someone had the idea of making mother-of-pearl souvenirs, which were sold in masses to the American troops in the Pacific, and this created a new interest which still holds its ground.

"At present the demand for mother-of-pearl is good, even greater than the supply. The buyers fight for every day's take, and they've every reason to. They pay thirty francs [48 cents] a kilo here and sell for fifty francs [80 cents] on the world market. Diving's over for today, but wait till tomorrow, and you'll see a good row when the canoes come back fully loaded."

However, we also wanted to see how the diving itself was done, and therefore decided to accompany some of the Raroians next morning. It had hardly begun to grow light when we heard a fierce hooting of sirens from the creek by the village. We quickly swallowed a little food and hurried down to the shore of the lagoon, where our friends Tehei and Tinorua were already waiting for us. Tehei had left a paddle canoe of his own on Takume the season before; we found and launched it. It was a trifle leaky, but at all events it floated, and that was the main thing.

Numbers of canoes had already collected round the four motor-boats, and laughing Polynesians were busy stringing them together. We paddled over to the nearest boat, and after a short wait the end of a rope was thrown over to us. A quarter of an hour later everything seemed to be ready. The captain gave the signal for departure and at last we moved off in a long string, I counted the canoes and found that our flotilla consisted of no less than sixteen.

"How much do you pay for the towing?" I asked Tehei.

"Thirty mother-of-pearl mussels a day."

"Thirty mussels! But if you want to pay in money, how much does it cost?"

"The boat-owner doesn't want any money, he wants mother-of-pearl mussels."

This hardly surprised me. Thirty mussels weighed at least 15 kilos (about 33 pounds) and were worth 450 Tahitian francs ($7.20). With sixteen canoes in tow the boat-owner earned 7,200 francs (over $115) a day. This was undeniably good pay.

After half an hour's towing we reached some large shoals in the

southern part of the lagoon. Here the motor-boat left us and returned to the village. The canoes spread out quickly, every diver seeking his favourite place. We ourselves paddled over to the nearest coral shoal, where we made our canoe fast to a large rock.

"It's best to be a bit careful at first," said Tehei, "A lot of people start deep diving at once, but that's just stupid. They grow tired too quickly and risk getting cramps. I always begin by diving for the mussels which are on the sides of the shoal. It's an easy and pleasant way of warming oneself up."

As he spoke he put on his goggles, tied a net bag tightly to his belt and drew a canvas glove over his right hand. Then he slid down into the water and vanished beneath the surface. After a time his head came up again alongside the canoe.

"There are plenty of mussels here," he announced with satisfaction. "Jump in, all of you, it's not more than twenty-five or thirty feet deep."

We followed his advice and jumped in. We sank slowly towards the bottom. Tehei and Tinorua moved about in the water with perfect ease, but I myself was hopelessly clumsy and slow, and when they began to pick the first mussels I had got hardly more than half-way. Although the pressure round my head did not feel any worse than that of an army steel helmet, there came a sudden rushing and singing in my ears. I therefore decided to stay where I was, for after all I was losing nothing by doing so.

The water was clear and transparent, and I could clearly see my companions and all that they were doing. They had a firm hold of the coral wall with their left hands and with their gloved right hands they were breaking large bearded mussels loose and dropping them into the bags on their belts. It looked simple.

I caught sight of a huge mussel just under my nose and immediately decided to follow their example. I remembered warnings not to stick one's fingers into the opening and took a firm grip of the lower part of the shell. Then I tried to bend it sideways as I had seen my friends do. But the result was far from what I expected. The mussel did not move an inch, but I myself quickly withdrew from it. I took hold of it again, braced myself and flung myself at it. Same result. I had several more tries, but naturally, the harder I went for it the farther away and higher up I floated. I might as well have tried to knock over a ninepin with an india-rubber balloon.

I studied Tehei's and Tinorua's technique for some minutes and discovered that they always took hold of the coral wall with the left hand a little way *below* the mussel. This was clearly the trick. I did as they did and actually succeeded in making the mussel budge a little. My supply of air was giving out, but I had resolved not to return to the surface empty-handed and stubbornly launched a fresh attack. To apply greater force I

put my feet into a crevice lower down in the coral shoal and caught hold of the mussel with both hands. Then I pulled. At last it gave way and came loose.

I floated up to the surface blue in the face and struggling for breath, with my trophy in my arms. A few seconds later Tehei and Tinorua came up. They had each of them about a dozen mussels. I decided in future to devote myself to *cleaning* mussels.

After one or two more immersions my friends thought the time had come to begin to dive in deeper water, where the mussels were larger and more numerous. We paddled away about fifty yards from the shoal and dropped anchor. It did not reach bottom till we had let out nearly a hundred feet of rope, but that did not seem to trouble Tehei and Tinorua in the least. They quietly produced a couple of sinkers to which thin lines were attached, and put on their goggles.

"It's no good swimming down a hundred feet," Tehei explained. "It would take too long. So we always use sinkers at great depths. And to be able to move more easily we don't bring the mussels up with us each time, but we use small baskets like these; we leave them at the bottom and only hoist them up when they are full."

He showed us a net basket furnished with lead sinkers. Then he fastened a line to it and flung it overboard. Meanwhile Tinorua got ready and jumped into the water. Tehei gave him one of the sinkers, and, apparently without having made any particular effort to fill his lungs with air, he vanished into the depths. I looked at my watch. It took fourteen seconds for the line to run out. I continued to follow the second hand. Half a minute. One minute. One minute fifteen seconds. Suddenly the water began to bubble, and a few seconds later Tinorua came shooting up like a rocket. One minute twenty-three seconds. Not bad. Tinorua exhaled with a whistling noise, heaved himself up on to the edge of the canoe and rested. He sat for a long time silent, relaxed, and huddled up. Then, as it were, he returned to life again and began to talk and laugh.

Meanwhile Tehei had hauled up Tinorua's sinker and got his own ready, and in a few minutes they both jumped in. After that they glided up and down through the water as regularly as if they had been using a lift, and Marie-Thérèse and I were kept busy cleaning.

In one of his rest periods Tinorua told us that many divers stayed under water a good deal longer than they did, but that they also had to rest longer between their dips. He himself considered a minute and a half under water and three minutes above to be the ideal times. A minute and a half was just the time he and Tehei spent under water; on the other hand, they rested for considerably more than three minutes. I counted the number of dives, and they averaged twelve an hour.

A hundred similar canoes were bobbing up and down all round us, and shining brown divers were slowly filling them with mussels. Most of the divers were strong Tarzan-like men who would have done credit to any South Seas film, but here and there we discovered parties of women who seemed to be diving as keenly and energetically as the men. I asked Tehei what he thought of the women divers, and he replied at once:

"Most of them are better than the men because they're fatter. A fat person doesn't get so cold as a thin one down in deep water and also comes up to the surface more quickly. But the result is seldom any better, for the women waste at least half the time in gossiping."

While the divers were generally men and women in the prime of life, most of the mussel-cleaners were old people and children. The authorities have forbidden all mussel-cleaning in the villages on hygienic grounds, and therefore it is always done in the canoes at the same time as the diving.

Even a practised cleaner can sometimes have difficulty in keeping up with the divers, and, of course, it was even harder for Marie-Thérèse and me. However swiftly we picked the contents out of the mussels, the heap in front of us grew without interruption. Like, undoubtedly, most greenhorns we found the work intensely exciting to begin with and hoped at any moment to find a large gleaming pearl, but as time passed our spirits gradually fell and we dreamed no longer of pearls but of refreshing green coconuts.

The sun and the smell too became more unbearable every minute, and when at about eleven the motor-boat at last appeared we were already so tired of the wretched business that we would gladly have exchanged the work even for copra-cutting. Tinorua and Tehei seemed completely unaffected by their considerably more tiring work and joked and chatted merrily with the other divers in the flotilla, which was beginning to reassemble.

While we were being towed back to the village we counted the mussels. The result was anything but bad: 211 mussels, many of which were as large as a plate and certainly weighed about four and a half pounds. We cleaned up the most unsightly and cut off a number of excrescences here and there, so that we could sell them directly we arrived at the village. This proved to be good idea.

We had hardly landed when the mother-of-pearl merchants attacked us. They had cunningly laid out on the ground masses of bicycles, gramophones, beach suits, and other attractive things, and our friends, like most of the other divers, quickly fell for the tempting wares and gave the Chinese all their mother-of-pearl in exchange for the merchants' rubbish.

After a few hours rest we went off on another and shorter trip, which

yielded about half as much mother-of-pearl as the morning expedition, i.e. 94 mussels. We again accompanied our friends when they sold their take and found that it weighed as much as 67 kilos (about 147 lbs). Earlier they had weighed in 142 kilos (about 312 lbs), so that the total result was 209 kilos (about 460 lbs). As the price was 30 francs per kilo that meant that their day's earnings were 3,135 francs each (about $50), which must be considered good pay!

This may seem easily earned money, but in reality it is blood money. No one can resist the severe pressure down in the depths and endure the too violent ascents and descents. The health of most of them is ruined sooner or later, and every season one or two divers inevitably lose their lives, generally beginners, who get cramp or are attacked by giddiness while on the sea bottom. Others fall victim to a haemorrhage of the lungs or meet the most insidious danger of all - giant mussels. Here and there, in crevices in the coral shoals and the sea bottom, huge tridacna mussels lie hidden, and a man who happens to tread on one of them has no chance of escape. The mussel shuts on his foot like a trap, and all attempts to loosen it are in vain.

During our short stay on Takume - rather more than three weeks - we were, significantly enough, witnesses of three fairly slight accidents and one death. The latter took place one morning when we chanced to be in the village. Diving is always stopped immediately when a serious accident happens. As soon, therefore, as we saw the whole flotilla of canoes on its way home we knew what had happened. All the inhabitants of the village collected down on the beach, silent and anxious.

Suddenly a woman began to weep, and soon all joined in her lamentation. Before long there was evidently not a woman who was not convinced that it was her husband or her son to whom an accident had happened, for they were all calling out the names of their relations and sobbing as if their hearts would break. When the flotilla came nearer one or two boys climbed up into a coconut palm and in a little while one of them announced shrilly:

"It's Paiva, it's Paiva. He's dead."

We too, one after another, saw the fatal signal. One of the canoes carried a red *pareu* at half-mast, and bystanders assured us that there was no doubt of its being Paiva's canoe.

As soon as everyone had ascertained who the victim was, the scene changed surprisingly quickly. Tears and lamentations ceased as by magic, and the whole crowd disappeared towards the village in small groups. Soon we were alone on the beach. Clearly Paiva had neither family nor friends on Takume. In a little while we heard a cracked gramophone strike up an American popular song, and a few minutes later the village once

more resounded with shouting and laughter.

We waited till the flotilla arrived and poor Paiva was carried ashore. He had been seized with cramp and drowned before anyone could come to his help. There was, of course, the usual rush by the whole gang of buyers and mother-of-pearl merchants, but they did not so much as cast a glance in the direction where Paiva's body lay, and disappeared at once as soon as they had weighed in the mother-of-pearl.

The divers seemed just as unconcerned, and most of them hurried up to the village at once to eat and amuse themselves. Only a few men from one of the motorboats and we ourselves accompanied the dead man to the churchyard, where he was left without ceremony until the burial on the following day. A little later the bearers too were dancing to their hearts' content on the festival ground of the village.

We understood. Evidently the universal distress and weeping were due only to the uncertainty of waiting and the fear that disaster had overtaken some relative or friend. That a death had occurred was naturally, in itself, not a thing which could have much effect on hardened mother-of-pearl divers. It was only an occupational risk which had to be taken into account.

Another danger which lies in wait for the divers is the so-called *taravana*. One day when we returned from the mother-of-pearl waters I saw a man ceaselessly bailing out his canoe with an energy which I had never before seen any Polynesian show. I decided to keep my eye on him. In a little while I discovered that he was bailing where no water was. There was not a drop in the scoop when he ‘emptied’ it over the railing.

"What’s the matter with him?" I asked Tehei curiously.

"Oh, that’s Tepava," he said. "He’s got the *taravana*."

"*Taravana?*"

"Yes, he’s done so much diving that he’s become queer in the head. That happens to a lot of divers. My father got the *taravana* here last year. He did everything the wrong way round. If, for example, I asked him to come out fishing with me, he put on his Sunday clothes and got out his hymn-book. If I told him to dress for church, he put on his working clothes and went and cut up copra. But the most absurd thing was that when we ate he tried to pour coffee on to the fish and stuff the meat into a tumbler!"

"How dreadful!" said Marie-Thérèse with true feminine sympathy.

"Why?" Tehei replied. "We thought it was great fun and were sorry when he got well again. I know two men who’ve never got well. One of them, as soon as he gets hold of a pillow, always pulls out the feathers and tries to make them into soup. The other rings the church bell for days on end. For a long time they tried to make him verger and get him just to ring

for morning and evening service, but it didn't work. So what they do now is to stop him ringing for a short time in the morning and a short time in the evening. When the church bell isn't ringing everyone knows it's time for the service."

"Can nothing be done to cure the sickness?" I asked.

"The only thing is to drink a lot of rum. Sometimes that does good, sometimes it doesn't."

I turned to my favourite subject and made one more attempt to convince Tehei of the advantages of wearing diving dress. He was as sceptical as usual and declared that it was much more dangerous to dive with diving dress than without. He affirmed by way of proof that several merchants in Tahiti had imported complete diving equipment, but that all who had used it had died while in the water. I took an opportunity later of asking Pahoa what the facts of the case were.

"It's true enough that many people who've tried diving dress have had accidents," he said. "But that's the fault of the divers, not the dresses. We made an experiment once here on Takume, but it was the same as on all the other mother-of-pearl islands. We give the divers proper instructions as to what to do, but they did everything wrong; some even started a competition to see who could stay under water longest.

"The assistants were hardly any better. They fooled and ragged all the time, and suddenly forgot about the air pumps or broke them. But that wasn't the worst part. A diver ought not to bend quickly and must never have his head lower than his diaphragm, but of course none of them paid any attention to that, and the result was that many of them had haemorrhages, sometimes so serious that they died."

"But why not use European divers?" I asked.

"Several speculators have tried it, but the natives have always stopped such experiments for fear of competition. So we've gradually gone back to the old diving methods, and at present there isn't one island in French Oceania where modern equipment is used. It isn't particularly sensible, but it's obviously the only solution, unless one cultivates mussels."

"Cultivate mussels? I've read about it. How's that done?"

"Come home with me and have a drink, and I'll tell you something interesting," Pahoa replied mysteriously.

Of course I did not wait to be asked twice, but accompanied him to the lee side of the island, where he lived in distinguished isolation. Pahoa took two crystal glasses out of his fine antique cupboard and sent one of the maids to fetch two bottles of champagne. He was clearly a man who knew not only all about mother-of-pearl and diving, but also how to profit by his knowledge. I listened, therefore, with peculiar interest when he sat down comfortably in an arm-chair and began to narrate:

"My father came here as far back as some time in the sixties, when a white man's life was hardly safe in the Tuamotu group. But somehow or other he succeeded in getting on with the leading men on the island, and after a time he married the *tahunga's* daughter. He began to dive for mussels as soon as the first trading schooners appeared, and gradually induced the rest of the islanders to follow his example. This was certainly worth while, for at that time there were still plenty of pearls. Soon Takume was one of the best known pearl and mother-of-pearl islands, and my father was one of the richest men in all French Oceania.

"By degrees, however, the pearls became rarer and rarer, and at last there were none left in the lagoon. A few years later the number of mussels also began to fall off. and towards the end of the eighties it was hardly worth the trouble to go diving for them. The cause was the same old one. The bottom was covered with a thick layer of sand and mud, and the mussels could no longer take hold.

"Then came the great cyclones of 1903 and 1906. They drowned Takume like so many islands. When they had swept past nothing was left of father's house and wealth. The house was built of mahogany and full of antique furniture which father had bought in Paris. What was still worse was that several boxes of silver coins and pearls which he kept in his study had disappeared too.

"Father built a house of pandanus leaves and began to make copra like everyone else. Several years passed. Then one day, when he was out fishing, he suddenly saw some big mother-of-pearl mussels on the bottom. He dived down and found to his astonishment that the bottom was covered with stones and broken-off palm-trees, on which thousands of mussels were growing and thriving. Soon, of course, Takume was prosperous again. But my father had had an idea.

"The coconut palms and stones which the cyclones had hurled into the lagoons had given the mussels a hard foundation again, which they could take hold of. Thus all was well for the time, but how long would it be before the palms rotted and the stones were covered with mud again? When this happened there would be an end to Takume's second era of prosperity.

"No one knew, or troubled to think, how long it would last, but my father decided at once to study the mussels and the bottom of the lagoon methodically to find an answer to the question. Father died just before the first world war, but I continued his investigations. Would you like to know the result? Everything looks bright at present, but believe me, in twenty or thirty years there will be no more mother-of-pearl mussels in the Takume lagoon.

"However, I have found a solution. There is no possibility of sweeping

the bottom clean of the mud and sand which are now being deposited. But why not do as Nature herself does? The cyclones strewed palm-trunks and stones over the whole lagoon and so formed a bottom. Assuming that everyone would co-operate, it would not be difficult to form a new bottom again by flinging in coral blocks. If, for example, all the divers took one or two blocks each time they were towed out to the mother-of-pearl grounds, it would certainly be possible to complete the work in a few seasons."

"That's certainly an excellent idea," I interrupted him. "But were you not speaking of cultivating mussels?"

"Wait a bit," said Pahoa, smiling. "Just when I had got so far in my reflections that I had decided to try to make the divers think of the future, I had a new idea. As the floating mother-of-pearl embryos suck themselves on to stones and tree-trunks on the bottom, perhaps they would just as well be able to fasten themselves to objects hanging loose in the water. I made a buoy and tied a coral block firmly to it with a rope.

"Then I adjusted the length of the rope so that the coral block hung fifteen or twenty feet above the sea bottom, and anchored the buoy. In a month's time I paddled out and examined the coral block. It was quite smooth, with nothing on it. I did not give up, but waited another two months and then took up the buoy again. This time the coral block was covered with countless small mother-of-pearl embryos which seemed to be thriving.

"I tried to move half the embryos to another stone which I hung up in the same way, but they died in a few days. But I found out by degrees that if I waited till the mussels were eight months old it was all right to move them. The next link in my experiment was to fasten stones all along the rope from the surface to the bottom, at intervals of about two feet. In this way I found out the least favourable depth at which the mother-of-pearl embryos would thrive.

"Having got so far, I came to think that perhaps some other material would do as well as stone, and began to try everything between heaven and earth. At last I found that the best material was a fine-meshed steel wire netting. It was easy to handle, and a buoy which would only hold a stone as big as a saucer could bear a great many feet of steel wire netting.

"After many years of experimenting I was able to harvest the first cultivated mussels. They were naturally just as large and fine as the other mussels in the lagoon and were not different from them in any way. So far I have only done a little experimental cultivation, but I am convinced that it would be possible to cultivate about 100,000 mussels per acre of sea bottom, and that they would be able to reach their full size in four years.

"The most difficult part remains, however, to make pearls! The only person who has succeeded so far is the Japanese Mikimoto, but I have

read everything that has been written about artificial pearls and have already made a number of experiments which promise well. Wait, and I'll show you."

Pahoa disappeared into the next room and reappeared in a little while with a cloth bag in his hand. He opened it carefully over a large round table of dark *tou* wood. Half a dozen pearls rolled out and were scattered over the polished surface. They were no bigger than grains of sago, but well-shaped and gleaming white. They seemed to have a light of their own, for they shone and glittered magically, although the sun had already begun to set and the room was dark. Pahoa and I looked at them in silence.

My host seemed to have fallen into a trance. I myself was struggling with a question, the answer to which I had long been seeking in vain: why was he telling me all this? As far as I could see, Pahoa had no reason whatever for disclosing his secrets to a stranger. The contrary seemed to be true. At last I broke the silence and asked him:

"But if you already know how to cultivate mussels, why don't you get oh with it? You could make a fortune in a few years, and at the same time you would have an opportunity of experimenting in pearl cultivation."

"I understand your being surprised," Pahoa said, blinking. "But unfortunately it isn't all as easy as you think. I'm old and have no children. I might be able to continue the work for a year or two longer, but even that isn't certain. I have wanted for a long time to engage some workmen and a white foreman. But, to tell the truth, there are no workmen to be had in the Tuamotu group. All the natives detest regular work, and I can understand it. Why should they work for anyone else when they have land of their own, can dive for mother-of-pearl when they like, and have more money than they want?"

Pahoa fell silent. Then he moved his chair nearer mine and continued in a low voice:

"When I saw you, I thought: 'Here's the man for me.' Perhaps you would like to stay here and help me? If you have any friends who are interested, perhaps you could bring them here too, for there's work for more than one man. I think I could rely on you. We could divide the earnings equally. What do you think of the proposal?"

Of course it was quite impossible to accept his offer, so I refused as delicately as possible. Nor, for that matter, was I quite convinced that the whole of Pahoa's story was absolutely true. Pahoa had the reputation of being a shrewd man of business, and who knows? Perhaps he had exaggerated his successes somewhat to induce me to join him? During the rest of our stay on Takume hardly a day passed by but Pahoa endeavoured to talk me over or give me meaning winks when I met him in the village; but I was firm.

While I was talking mother-of-pearl with Pahoa or strolling about the village with Marie-Thérèse, studying the native life, our Raroian friends went on diving. But as we had foreseen, their early zeal soon disappeared, and most of them gave up after only a fortnight. They had then earned over 30,000 francs ($480) and considered that they well deserved a little rest and diversion. I do not know exactly how they had managed to get rid of practically every centime in one wild week of merry-making, but I suspect that most of the money went in drink or gambling.

The only person who tried to follow our well-meant advice to buy something useful (we knew it was useless to advise anyone to save money) was Tehei. He came to us one day radiant and announced that he had bought something which would be of use to the whole family for many years. When he unfolded the dirty bundle of newspapers he carried under his arm we saw that it was samples of a complete table service for twelve persons, with soup tureen, meat dish, and four different kinds of plates. It was in fact not a bad idea, and we praised Tehei wannly till we heard the price. He had paid 10,000 francs (over $160) for the service.

Before we started from Raroia our friends had talked of staying on Takume for the whole diving season (three months), but when the week of merry-making was finished and their money too they all thought they had had enough, and although a number of Chinese dealers and speculators tried to entice them with toys, razors, flowered cloths, and even rocking chairs, they refused to begin diving again. Of course they would have had no objection to continuing the festivities for a little while, but as this was impossible without money they at last agreed to Tinorua's sensible proposal to return to Raroia, have a good rest for a time, and then come to Takume again for another spell of work. We ourselves were more than tired of the noise and drunkenness and longed to get back to Raroia. We therefore welcomed the thought.

Our journey home was unforgettable for several - and not altogether pleasant - reasons. Just when we were beginning to stow away our possessions on board and get the canoes ready, a schooner appeared whose captain declared that he intended to return at once to Papeete via Raroia and several other interjacent islands. This was naturally too attractive for our friends to resist, and they immediately decided to take the schooner.

"But you haven't any money left," was my astonished objection.

"Oh, that doesn't matter,' Tepuka answered. "We've a little copra on Raroia we can give the captain, and if that's not enough any of the merchants will lend us money."

"H'm, but what shall we do with the canoes?"

"We'll take them with us, of course,"

I looked sceptically at the schooner. About ten canoes, lashed fast, lay on the deck, and homeward bound divers were waiting on the beach with at least as many. The schooner's captain, however, acted on the generous principle that nobody must be disappointed, and, roaring with laughter, took on board not only all the canoes and divers, but also a hundred tons of mother-of-pearl and several boat-loads of copra. No one seemed ever to have heard of Mr Plimsoll, for I searched for his ingenious load-marks and could not find any. But, of course, that might have been because they had been far below the water-line for a long time already.

From our place on an inverted canoe in the after deck we had a good view over the chaos. The company was mixed to say the least, for besides the yelling crowd of divers, adventurers, dealers, and prostitutes from Takume, there was a large party of whiteclad Mormons, on the way home from the consecration of a church on an island farther west.

I counted the passengers and found that there were 143 of us, undeniably a bit tough for a schooner of 200 tons, which usually took not more than twenty-five persons. The canoes totalled thirty-one, and there were also innumerable cases and boxes in every corner of the deck. As a result of this we were immoderately crowded; indeed we sat so tightly packed that we had difficulty in stretching our legs. But others were still worse off than we were, for they sat huddled up in the ratlines and were obliged to hold on tight in order not to tumble overboard. Naturally there was no lavatory, and as for food, of course everyone had to fend for himself as best he could.

No one complained; on the contrary, all seemed to enjoy this intimate social life and laughed, yelled, and chattered ceaselessly. The sound of hymn-singing and string music came without interruption from the party of Mormons. They had been the first passengers on board and had been clever enough to take with them two large tables, under which they lay comfortably extended in the shade.

A party of card-playing divers had seated themselves on the top of one of the tables and seemed to enjoy the company they were in, for they sometimes joined in the hymn-singing. Elsewhere on the deck the few who still had any money left played games of chance, while old people told stories of days long past and mothers suckled their children. Now and then the captain looked out of his cabin, blew a whistle, and waved his arms at the steersman as a sign that he was to alter course.

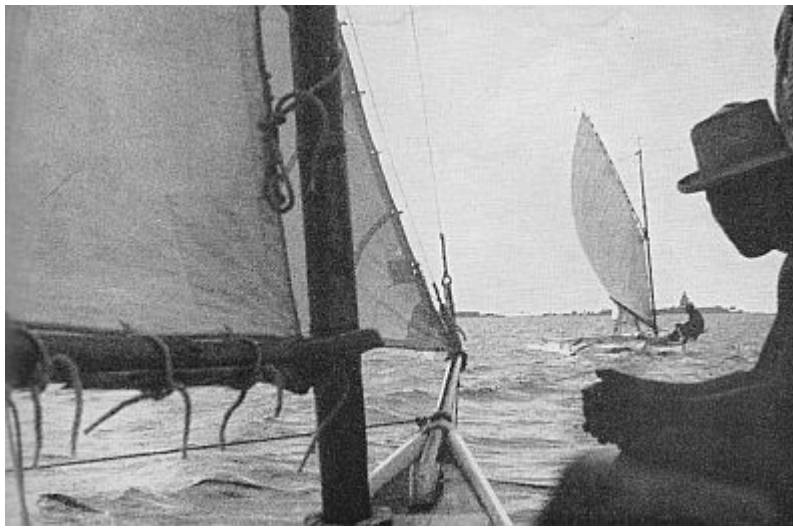
All the crowd and noise would have been bearable if only the boat had not begun to toss. But we had hardly got out into the strait between Takume and Raroia when the schooner began to roll and put her nose into the seas. We were lucky enough to be sitting near one of the ship's boats and had something to hold on to, but the poor souls who were sitting in the

middle of the deck were quite helpless and began to roll to and fro like peas.

Boxes and cases too began to slide, and suddenly the tables on the after deck rushed off at such a pace that the card-players tumbled down among the psalm-singing Mormons and silenced several of the voices for a time. This gave everyone a good laugh, but when a little later the sea grew rougher hardly anyone laughed any more.

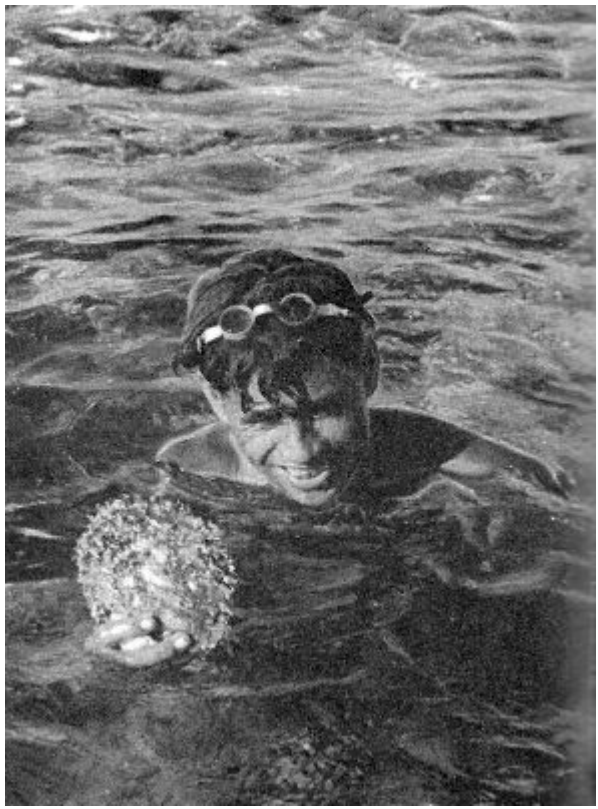
Contrary to what one would expect, by no means all Polynesians can stand the rolling, and soon many of the passengers became yellow in the face and hastened to hang themselves doubled up over the rail. As the crowd had scarcely become less, but rather greater, they did not always get to the side in time, and in a little while we preferred, for reasons that will be understood, to climb up into the rigging, where we remained until a few hours later the schooner glided into smooth water.

After the noise, greed, and sham civilization of Takume, it was refreshing to experience afresh Raroia's peace and quiet and see again the kindly idyllic life of Ngarumaoa village. We looked at the shores as they slid past us and felt deeply thankful that so unspoilt a paradise still existed on earth. We had been as overwhelmed that day long ago when we arrived on board the *Teretai*, but there was one important difference. Then we were still uncertain and wondering how we should be received. Now, on the other hand, we were happy and safe and felt as if we had at last arrived home after long years of wandering.



In outrigger canoes, such as these, we sailed from Raroia to Takume.

The eternal wind gently sways the palms.



Maona brings up from the depths of the Takume lagoon a pearl mussel. Mother-of-pearl, the hard internal layer of these mussel shells, is a profitable source of income in French Polynesia.

After I gave up trying to dive and collect mussels as the natives do, Tehei showed us how to open a pearl mussel.

The longer we stayed on the island, the more Polynesian we became in our ways. More and more we found ourselves sitting and simply doing nothing. Here Marie-Thérèse leisurely strokes our cat....

....but sometimes I summoned enough energy to do a little exploring on the island, and this time I found a whale vertebra.

The Raroians are indeed carefree! A youngster is given a ride on a palm-leaf sled (*below, left*), little girls munch pandanus nuts (*below, right*) and a boy engages in his favorite pastime, playing with a spin made from a palm frond (*above*).

CHAPTER TWELVE

We Look Back

The village wakes up - Morning activity - Retrospect Raroia an exception - Peace and independence - Heat waves - A dramatic disaster - Left in the lurch - We eat starch - A jack-of-all-trades needed - Seduction of the South Seas - A letter - An impossible dream - What the future may bring

THE village has just woken up. Windows and doors are opened a little and sleepy faces lookout. Cheerful shouts and laughter break the silence, and soon the first yawning Raroians are seen through the palms. Most of them have, as usual, slept with their clothes on under a blanket or pandanus mat and therefore start the day by undressing to perform their toilets. More and more brown forms in red and and blue *pareu* begin to appear in the back yards.

Two little girls run by on their way to the village tank to fetch a few bottles of the precious water. They give us a wave of recognition. Others cry '*ia ora na*' when they catch sight of us or stop for a moment to shake hands with us. Everyone is cheerful and open; no one any longer regards us as strange incomprehensible *popaa*. We have long been accepted into the community and are regarded by all as genuine Raroians.

In a little while Temararaa and Terava come along with a few bunches of coconuts, cool from the night, picked by them just outside the village. They leave two on our veranda and hurry on. We cut holes in them with practised hands and empty them with pleasure. We are quite satisfied with this simple breakfast, but most of our friends want, as usual, to start the day with a considerably more solid meal and are already busy preparing it.

On the other side of the village street, for example, Hamani is squatting on the front steps making the morning coffee. She fills a little cloth bag with green unshelled beans. Then she lays the bag on the stone step and beats it vigorously with a stick. In a little while the shells corns loose; she opens the bag and carefully removes them. A fire of coconut fibre is already burning in the garden. She lays the coffee beans in a large frying-pan and puts the pan on the fire. Soon the beans are roasted, and she disappears behind the house to grind them.

I suddenly catch sight of Terai down on the beach. He first looks round carefully, and then steals cautiously out on to the quay with a large spear

in his hand. He knows from long experience that many fish come into shallow water during the night and that there is a good chance that the first comer will take them by surprise.

A light easterly breeze ripples the water, but Terai has eyes like a gull; it is not long before he perceives a suitable quarry. His spear flies on its errand like lightning, and immediately afterwards he jumps head first into the water. He sends clouds of foam flying as he wrestles with his invisible opponent, but at last he succeeds in throwing him up on to the beach. It is a big *kito*. The whole family comes running down at once to help him carry the welcome breakfast fish home. When he approaches our house he shouts as usual:

"How much do you want? Come and choose a piece!"

This time we decline his offer with thanks, as we have already more fish than we can eat. Terai mutters discontentedly for a few moments, as if he had made a bad bargain, but at last gives up the attempt to persuade us and goes on.

A few hundred yards out in the water Maono stands on a large coral block, net in hand. He has been standing practically motionless for the last half-hour and seems, as usual where fishing is concerned, to have unlimited patience. The morning sun gilds him, and he shines like a copper statue.

A little farther down the creek several outrigger canoes are rocking on the waves. A couple of boys are hoisting sails. We can see no pandanus mats, boxes, or water-bottles on board. So it is evidently just a pleasure trip. Quite right: when we look in their direction a little later they are racing their canoes in the creek to their hearts' content. The wind has freshened a little, and now and then the outriggers rise out of the water.

On such a day we ourselves are sitting on our veranda in the shade of a huge *tiare* tree, trying to draw up a 'balance sheet' after our year’s stay on Raroia. Our diary gives us an abundance of material and more, and we turn the pages to and fro as we talk and argue. Our intention, when we decided to return to Raroia, was quite simply to live the everyday life of a coral island long enough to discover in what respects it was better or worse than civilized everyday life. Of course this is a very subjective and personal question, and the only thing we can do is to give our own answer and let others judge for themselves as best they can on the basis of our account.

Marie-Thérèse and I are indeed completely in agreement as to our answer, but are a trifle dubious as to how we shall formulate it in the best way so that it will be most easily understood. Perhaps the clearest and simplest way of putting it is just to say that Raroia is the ideal place for

people weary of civilization who want for a short time to live a pleasant open-air life among cheerful, open-minded friends.

Of course this should not be taken to signify that all the South Seas romantics are always right when they praise 'the simple natural life' and condemn the curses of civilization. For the sake of truth it must be stated that everything worked in a particularly fortunate way to make our stay a success. The island is an exception in a group of islands which as a whole is also an exception, I first made the Raroians' acquaintance under especially happy and favourable circumstances, and therefore we did not come as strangers. No other white people had previously undermined the Raroians' confidence or abused their friendship. We have, moreover, been completely independent and lived only as casual visitors or tourists, which naturally has prevented any conflicts or difficulties such as continually are with settlers, officials, missionaries and business men.

Last, but not least, we have been fortunate enough to be able in some degree to repay our friends' generosity and hospitality by caring for those who have been sick and helping them in their intercourse with the queer *popaa* world, represented by Papeete and the authorities. This has removed any onesidedness from our relations and increased their cordiality.

But let us analyse this exceptional island Raroia a little more closely and try to find out exactly what are the principal things of value that life here has to offer. First of all, like all 'civilized people' who have had similar experiences, we would name the vast unbroken peace. There are no street noises, no noise of machinery, the nearest telephone is 470 miles away, newspapers are unknown, and no one uses a clock except as an ornament.

But, of course, there is not complete silence. Complete silence is notoriously oppressive and trying. Just occasionally absolute quiet prevails all over the island, but as a rule the trade wind rustles through the palm-tops by night and day with varying strength. This harmonious song of the wind, instead of disturbing the island peace, only increases it. Of course there are quarrels and sometimes even fights in the village, but in general the people too bear the stamp of this peace.

The Raroian peace stems from the fact that the people have no material anxieties and no other object in life than just to live. When we first came to the island we were often astonished at the men being able to sit for hours on end looking out for fish and turtles, but now the Polynesian peace has penetrated us too; the other day, for example, we sat for over an hour waiting for a coconut to fall. It did not fall, and another good half-hour passed before we at last prevailed upon ourselves to knock it down with a stick.

Another refreshing experience in life on Raroia is its independence. We have no hours to keep, no duties that call us, no etiquette, no fashions to follow, and no other relations with our fellow-men than those which friendship dictates.

Another advantage of Raroia life is that one practically never need have any money dealings. We have regularly ordered most of our goods in Papeete, so we have only had to get out our *tou*-wood cash-box when a schooner has called, which only happens every fifth or sixth week. We have paid Temake and the Chinese merchant at the same time, if we happened to owe them anything. There is no other way of spending money on Raroia - apart from mass on Sundays, when we, like the rest of the Raroians, put 10 francs each into the community's pandanus collecting-basket. Even if the concentration of expenditure in this way does not make life cheaper, it does one good not to have to be continually fiddling with money.

But what about the cost ofliving on Raroia? The following short summary of our monthly budget may be of interest:

Food	2,500 Tahitian francs	$40.00
Kerosene	200 Tahitian francs	$3.20
Medicine	300 Tahitian francs	$4.80
Transportation	0	
Rent	0	
Water	0	
Amusements	0	
Total	3,000 Tahitian francs	$48.00

To this can be added expenditure on clothes, which would have amounted to a few hundred francs a month if we had been compelled to buy the few necessary articles of clothing on board the schooners. It should be pointed out that apart from medicine (for all the inhabitants of the village) none of this expenditure is *absolutely* necessary, and can therefore be reduced at will. Canned goods and imported sweet potatoes can be replaced by fish, turtle, and various coconut dishes, and instead of using kerosene one can cook over a fire of coconut fibre. On account, however, of the trouble and the monotony of such a diet we have never been tempted to reduce our budget, and we should not care to advise anyone else to try such an experiment.

There are two sides to everything, and naturally there are certain inconveniences and disadvantages. For example, during the summer months, from October to April, there are several heat waves, in which the temperature often rises to 100°. At these times it is so scorchingly hot and oppressively sultry that even the least movement and the simplest work are an effort, and it has sometimes even happened that we have spent several days in succession on our divan in a state of unbroken inertia. But there are not more than twenty-five or thirty of these stifling days in a year, and they are, as I have said, spread over a period of about six months.

The geographical isolation of the place is the principal reason why its quiet and peace are still undisturbed, but naturally it has other and more unfortunate consequences. As the schooner traffic is scanty and unreliable, it is only a stroke of luck if a boat turns up when it is most needed, i.e. in the case of serious illness. A dramatic experience of our own is a good illustration of this.

We were awakened one night by a little girl who, in reply to our sleepy questions what was wrong, told us that Tehetu had suddenly been taken ill. We hastened out into the pitch darkness and at last actually managed to find our way to her palm-leaf house without having been hit by a single one of the many coconuts that were falling like hail. Tehetu was sitting huddled up on the floor with a pillow in front of her stomach, moaning loudly. We examined her. She was fearfully tender on the right-hand side and had a high temperature. Obviously appendicitis. We obtained a bottle of iced water from Temake's refrigerator and laid it on the tender place. It was all we could do, but it was not much good. The only thing which could save her was certainly a speedy operation, but we understood that it would be at least a fortnight before a schooner appeared on her homeward voyage to Tahiti.

Next day Tehetu was worse, and we changed the water-bottles with the courage of desperation and hoped quite unreasonably that a schooner would come at once in spite of everything. After two days, however, we began to lose hope, and Tehetu declared resignedly that she was doomed and that it was useless to try to do anything for her. The morning of the third day dawned without any change in the situation. On the fourth day Tehetu was groaning loudly and flinging herself backwards and forwards on her bed of palm-leaves. Still, of course, no schooner was to be seen.

The same night, however, quite unexpectedly, there was a curious change. Tehetu suddenly sat up, put her hands on her stomach and said;

"The pain's moved over to the left-hand side."

In a little while it had disappeared altogether.

When, as expected, the schooner came a fortnight later, she went with it to Tahiti, and after a time returned fit and well with the good news that she had only had some temporary trouble with her ovaries, and that they had succeeded in curing her even without an operation.

But it is not every case of illness that ends so fortunately, and in the last few years more than one has had a fatal result.

Another result of Raroia's isolation and the lack of regular communications with Papeete is the chanciness of supplies. To begin with we bought our groceries, like everyone else, from Temake or the Chinese merchant. They were pretty well stocked and this way was simple and practical for us. But one day when we went to buy a little flour, Temake shook his head and told us there was no more flour. We went across to the Chinese merchant and received the same answer. A few days later there was no more rice and sugar, and a few days after that there were no more canned goods. No one knew when the next schooner would come.

"How does it happen that the stock runs out so suddenly?" I asked Temake. "There were enough groceries on board the last schooner to fill all the shops several times over."

"Yes, that's true enough," he replied, "but how am I to know how much I need? I'm not very good at reckoning."

"H'm, does it often happen that everything runs out like this?"

"Oh yes, several times a year," Temake answered, with an unjustifiably satisfied air.

Of course we ran no risk of starvation, for there were always fish and coconuts, but after a few days we were undeniably weary of this monotonous diet. We therefore asked our neighbour Manumea what he was eating, in the hope that he knew of some food with which we were not acquainted. This was clearly a good idea, for he replied at once:

"When there's no flour, of course we eat starch. There are plenty of *pia* plants, and my wife has just made a couple of pails of fresh starch."

"Starch? Do you mean that you make *poe* pudding?"

"No, fruit's needed for that. We mix the starch with coconut water and boil the mixture till it stiffens. Come with me, and you'll see how it's done."

We trudged across to Manumea's house, where his wife had just filled a large wash-tub with coconut water. Manumea produced a three-gallon pail full of starch and poured the contents straight into the wash-tub. Then, with his wife's help, he collected a large heap of coconut fibre and set light to it.

We wondered for a moment if they meant to put the wooden tub on the

fire, but soon realized that this was not so, but that they were using an ancient Polynesian method of heating which is now seldom seen. They put two or three large coral stones into the fire, and when these were quite red-hot they took them out carefully with the aid of a couple of sticks and threw them into the starch tub. In a little while the white soup congealed and assumed a greyish-green colour. The dish was ready.

Manumea gave us a large piece of the shapeless dough, and we went home pleased with the unexpected addition to our midday meal. We sat down at our table, laid more festally than usual for the occasion, and I put a spoon to the lump of starch. Before I had properly established contact it slipped away in a cowardly manner and teasingly installed itself a little way farther off on the table. I pursued it in vain for a good half-hour, but gave up at last in sheer exhaustion,

"You're too badly armed for starch-hunting," Marie-Thérèse said, and fetched a large kitchen fork.

With a triumphant expression she stuck the fork into the lump of starch, spun it round several times and lifted it. The result was crushing. Only a few thin threads came up with the fork. That was all. Clearly quite new tactics were needed if we were to have any prospect of success.

I remembered that in a sweets factory I had once seen a man cutting a mass of sugar in half with a large pair of scissors. We immediately tried this method, and to our great relief it proved to be excellent. We each of us cut off a piece of starch and bit into it. Five minutes later, after desperate efforts, we at last succeeded in opening our mouths again, at any rate enough to be able to breathe normally for awhile. Manumea's original concoction was stickier than paste and tougher than a bicycle tire. It took us a good hour to finish the lump of starch, and it was the most silent meal at which I have ever been present.

The lump of starch took its revenge for its inglorious defeat, A few hours later it began to swell and ferment in our stomachs, and soon it was raging and tearing at our poor intestines till we writhed like worms. We gave Manumea a good talking-to the next time we met him and asked him if the starch dish was really prepared in the regulation manner.

"Oh, yes, indeed," he replied, roaring with laughter, "but perhaps I forgot to say that starch always gives one a stomach-ache. Everyone in the village has had stomach-ache for several weeks."

After this experience, we kept to coconuts and fish, and when we wanted a change we ate fish and coconuts. In a few weeks' time a schooner actually came, and we wisely laid in at once a stock sufficient to stand a siege. But, as sometimes even the schooners had not certain articles, we soon took to ordering all our groceries in Papeete, which moreover reduced the cost to about one-half. Despite our example

everyone else on the island clung to the old system, and sure enough they have had to eat starch at least five times in the past year.

A further consequence of Raroia's isolation is that one has to rely solely on one's own powers and knowledge. A Raroian is architect, boat-builder, hairdresser, undertaker, tailor, and artisan all in one, and one must indeed be something of a jack-of-all-trades to be able to carry on at all. In many cases, of course, a little reflection is all that is needed to show what should be done, but now and then one finds that one unfortunately lacks the simple but necessary knowledge to solve a problem or execute apiece of work, just simply because one has never been faced with similar difficulties in our more specialized society.

For example, how should one set about making a spare part for a benzine lamp? How does a clock work? In what soil do potatoes do best? Why do fowls die suddenly? How is putty made? Can one cut glass in any other way than with a diamond? How are the springs fastened into a mattress so that it shall be level? These and similar questions are continually cropping up, and however many handbooks one has, there remain many queries to which one can find no answer. Of course one can do as we have done on several occasions: write to some acquaintance and ask. In this case, however, one must not be in a hurry; for as a rule it takes two or three months before an answer to a letter reaches Raroia.

These disadvantages - the great distance from a hospital and a chemist's shop, the occasional heat waves, the capricious shipping connections, and the limited resources on the island - are in our view many times outweighed by the advantages. The timeless quiet, freedom from worry, and independence are beneficial; we have, too, for a long time felt completely at home in our idyllic existence. This fact has more than once raised the question, whether we should be induced to remain in Raroia forever.

That afternoon on our veranda, Marie-Thérèse and I come to the conclusion that despite the advantages, permanent residence on Raroia would be impossible: we could not give up our former life completely for the simple reason that there is far too much in it which ties us and interests us. Only an exceptional person, I am sure, can hurriedly and cheerfully change his milieu and his conditions of life without developing a split personality. Besides, we had new tasks and duties waiting for us on the other side of the globe. We had already stayed too long on Raroia, and it was without a question time to leave.

We had hardly returned to so-called civilization before we started to long for Raroia and the South Seas again. In this longing we are, of course, not alone. But what really surprises us is to meet such a large

number of people who seem to cherish serious plans of settling permanently on a South Sea island. Let us therefore examine the possibilities of carrying out such a plan on Raroia. The following letter - one of several dozen I have received on different occasions - seems to me to represent quite well the motives and hopes of this group of South Sea lovers:

I am a young clerk who has become tired of the monotonous grind. I can no longer endure sitting in front of a typewriter all day, with being squashed in an overcrowded bus morning and evening, with continually having to hurry in order not to be too late and miss my chances (which for that matter I have already done only too often). Also I have a touch of rheumatism for which the northern cold is not good.

I have read a great deal about the South Seas and have begun to wonder if that is not the right place for me. I am no starry-eyed optimist who sees everything in rose-colour, and do not think that the South Sea islands are incarnations of paradise on earth. But the climate and the people must be better there, and there cannot be so little real happiness as here at home. I have not thought that one can live on nothing and am therefore ready for a "settler's life". I am young (twenty-eight) and not afraid to put my back into it.

My plan would be to settle on some out-of-the-way island, where there are no white men as yet, buy a bit of land, clear it and cultivate it myself. I have a little capital, and to make that last longer I have thought of living to begin with in the same simple way as the natives. I am not married, but perhaps it would not be impossible to find a native woman who would be willing to share my life. For a companion in life one must have.

I am writing to you because my knowledge of the geography of the South Seas is very small indeed, and therefore I thought you could advise me as to which might be the most suitable island or group of islands to settle on. From every point of view, of course, previous knowledge of the actual conditions is important, and that is what I lack. It does not matter what the island is like, so long as it is not too hot and there are no tropical diseases. .. .

The answer to this and similar letters is ever so simple. This optimistic South Seas dream is one that cannot possibly be realized - at least on Raroia. No foreigner would ever get permission to settle on the island, and even if he succeeded in getting the permission of the authorities, he would not find anyone who was willing to sell him land. To try, as a last resource, to live without either land or income is, of course, unthinkable for a foreigner, who lacks the Polynesians' dearly acquired knowledge of the atoll life.

If anyone finds this depressing, I should only like to remind him that it is just because the Tuamotu group is completely closed to foreigners that such fortunate exceptions as Raroia still exist. If the gates of paradise were opened to all those who had no other qualifications but that they liked the place, it would naturally soon cease to be a paradise.

No one who wishes the best for the Raroians and Polynesians can help

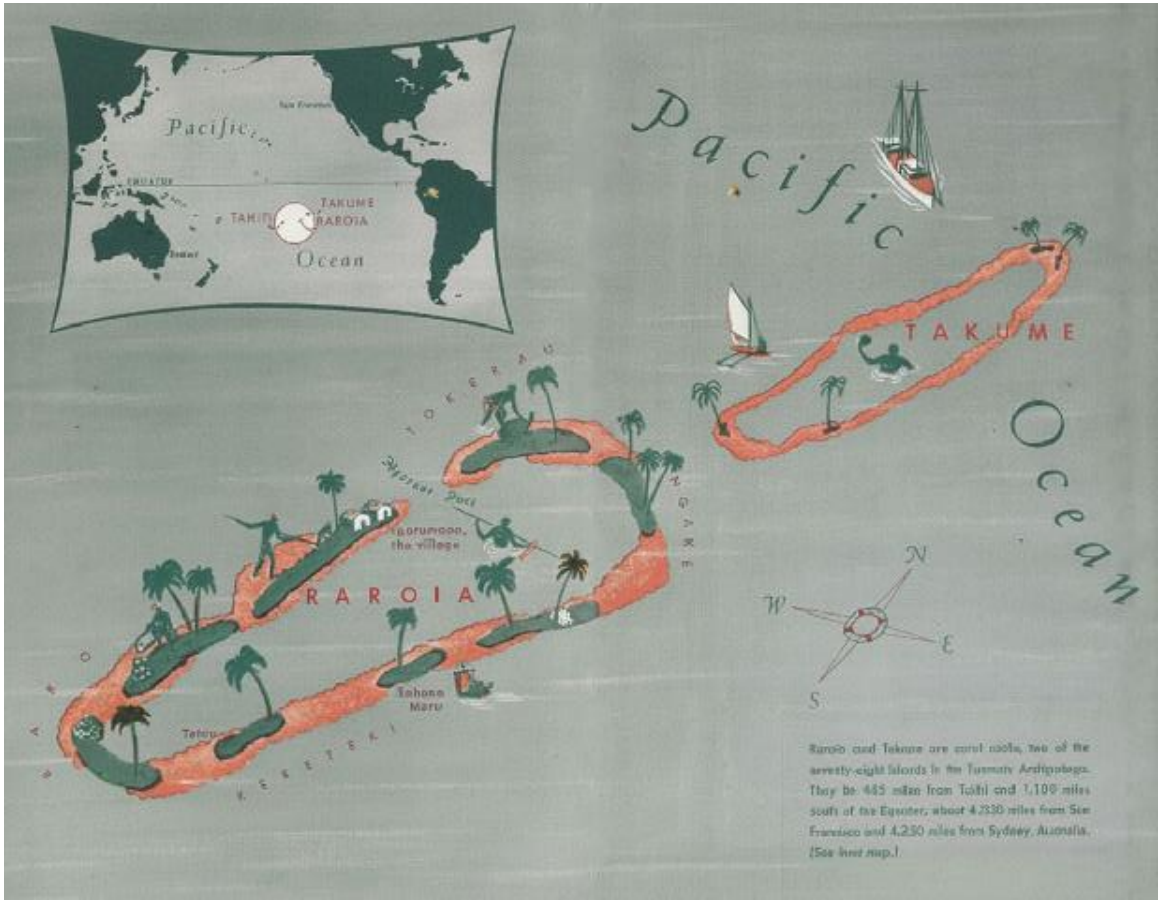
finding this policy of protection laudable and wise. But perhaps someone will ask, "Will it do any good in the long run?" and to this question - the last and the most important - the only possible answer must unfortunately be in the negative.

Just how many years it will be before Raroia loses its exceptional character, despite all precautionary measures, it is of course hard to prophesy, but this at all events is true - that those who are now children will have a more difficult, harder, rougher, and sadder life than their parents. The influence of Tahiti is already great, and with improved communications, which have already been promised, will become even more noticeable.

New but unwholesome foodstuffs will induce the Raroians to abandon the last of the old native dishes which still exist. More and more will be ruined by drink. The Chinese will gradually get them into their power altogether if their present exploitation is not stopped. The simple, idyllic conditions of life will gradually disappear. Tahitians and advanced Tuamotuans will teach the new generation contempt for the old values, and with every old person who dies more and more of the Polynesian friendliness and magnanimity will be replaced by more modem and profitable virtues.

The worst danger, however, is that of diseases: it is not impossible that these may mean the complete destruction of the inhabitants of Raroia, as in so many other places in the South Seas. Disquieting signs have begun to appear even during our stay; and time after time epidemics have raged and cost many lives. As there is universal ignorance of the most elementary precautions and methods of treatment, even a simple measles or influenza epidemic can be fatal.

However long we wrestle with the problem, the conclusion is always the same; even if at some future time chance should enable us to return to Raroia, we shall never again find the same happy island.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S
Raroia and Takume are coral atolls, two of the seventy-eight islands in the Tuamotu Archipelago. They lie 445 miles from Tahiti and 1,100 miles south of the Equator, about 4,750 miles from San Francisco and 4,250 miles from Sydney, Australia. (See inset map.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Readers of KON-TIKI will remember Bengt Danielsson as the tall, bearded Swede who confounded Peruvian passport officials by declaring that he entered the country by canoe and was leaving by raft. The daring anthropologist had just completed an expedition among the head-hunting Jibaro Indians, deep in the Amazon jungles, in 1947 when he joined the five Norwegians aboard the *Kon-Tiki* raft and embarked on "one of the most remarkable voyages in history..."* across the Pacific Ocean.

A graduate of Sweden's University of Upsala, Danielsson continued his studies at the University of Washington after returning to civilization. But his brief taste of life in the South Seas had made him restless, and in 1949 he and his attractive wife Marie-Thérèse set out on their own expedition to the Tuamotu Islands. What they saw and did there is told in this book.

Between travels the roving scientist also has written *The Forgotten Islands of the South Seas* (about the Marquesas Islands) and numerous magazine articles. After a six months' sojourn in the Hawaiian Islands, Danielsson, his wife, and their baby daughter Maruia (a Raroian name) are now back in the South Pacific on a new trip which has taken them so far to New Zealand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Tahiti.

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